

The Scholar & The Bard [Sequel to Bookworm & Toothless] (Stranger Things AU) by CarrieWrites

Series: Bookworm & Toothless (My Stranger Things AU Series) [2]

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Summary:

A whole year has passed.

A whole year without Eleven.

And everyone seemed to have forgotten her.

Everyone except for Michael Wheeler and...

Jessica Hernandez.

Jessica has matured within the year.

She learns many things.

How to properly shoot a gun.

How to parkour.

How to control her powers.

How much cutting your skin could hurt like a bitch.

And how it feels to nearly experience death.

And yet, she's still standing, with a new addition to her wardrobe.

Dustin's hat.

Dustin, who earlier in the year figured out his feelings towards the Colombian girl, is ready to confess his feelings to her.

But what happens when a new girl with her asshole stepbrother rolls into Hawkins distracts him, and Lucas as well, making Jess quite jealous and angry as well, sharing Mike's feelings about her wanting to join The Party? What happens when they realize they're not really quite yet done with The Upside Down? What happens when they get reunited with the telekinetic girl who saved them from the Demogorgon that fateful day on November 12, 1983, only to realize that, once again, she's their best bet at stopping this mess, once and for all?

1. Chapter 1

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

An alarm is heard from one of the buildings, a group of people in masks running out the door.

"Go! Go! Go! Go! Go!"

"Move it!"

"Let's get out of here!"

They all got in the van, closing the door when police sirens are heard.

The van drives off, with a police car hot on their tail.

They all took off their masks, an 11-year-old girl sitting on the lap of the young adult who had the shotgun, both having calm faces while everyone else was freaking out.

"Get 'em off of us, Mick!" someone shouted at the driver.

"I'm working on it!" she shouted back.

"The alley." the 11-year-old girl says, her Latin accent strong.

"To your right." the young adult finishes.

"Ok."

'Mick' made a sharp turn right.

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" she cursed as she tried to avoid hitting any of the cars.

"Shit!"

Someone laughed, but the 11-year-old girl kept a strong, calm face, holding onto the young adult's hand tightly.

As they made it out, Mick exhaled in relief.

"Okay. Okay."

The 11-year-old girl knew better though.

The chase wasn't over yet.

"Son of a bitch! We got more!"

"Shit!"

Mick pressed on the gas, the van driving faster.

"Do something, Kali and Poison Ivy. Do something!"

"Next right." 'Kali' says.

"There's a tunnel." 'Poison Ivy' continues.

"Take it." they both say, turning to Mick.

Mick nods at the two, making a sharp turn to the right.

As they drove through the tunnel, Kali and Poison Ivy closed their eyes, squeezing their joined hands a bit tighter.

With their free one, they lifted it up and closed it into a fist.

"Boom," Kali says.

"Zas.(Bam.)" Poison Ivy says.

They didn't see what the cops saw; which was the tunnel crashing down, but everyone cheered and laughed for the two girls as they exited the tunnel.

"Great job Kali and Gabby!"

'Gabby' kept a strong face as she and Kali wiped the blood from their noses, *008* tattooed on Kali's wrist while for Gabby, there was nothing.

X

Hawkins, Indiana

"Son of a bitch! Son of a bitch!"

Dustin was running around the house in search of something, throwing the cushions everywhere.

"Another stupid penny!" he says, throwing the coin across the room.

"Dusty, watch it! You almost hit Mews." his mom says, petting the cat.

"Can I please check under your cushions?"

"Dusty."

"Mom, please? It's an emergency!"

They both mimicked moaning at each other before his mom got up, Dustin checking under the cushions, smiling when he found two quarters.

"Love you, Mom."

He runs back to his room, grabbing the Supercomm and turning it to Lucas' channel.

"Lucas, you copy? I've got four quarters. What's your haul?"

"Take your puny haul and multiply it by five."

"How?"

"While you were scrounging around like a homeless bum, I mowed Old Man Humphrey's lawn."

"Old Man Humphrey's got that kinda cash?"

"You CLEARLY weren't listening to Jess when she talked about it last week. Just call Mike already."

"You call Mike."

"I have to go take a shower from doing real work, like a man. Over and out."

X

"Mike, do you copy? Mike, do you copy?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I copy." Mike answered, under El's pillow fort, his hand holding a polaroid photo.

"What the hell are you doing on this channel? Talking to Jess?"

"Nothing, and no."

"Lucas and I have six bucks in total. What's your haul?"

"Shit! I don't know yet."

"What do you mean you don't know yet?"

"Hold on. Call Will. I'll call Jess."

Mike then switched channel slightly to the one he knew Jess was recently using.

"Jess, I'm sorry if I'm interrupting but we need to know, what's your haul?"

"Don't worry, you didn't interrupt, I finished 30 minutes ago. My haul is 100 quarters."

"What?! How?!"

"Old Man Montgomery's lawn, Mama Sinclair's garden, Repainting Mama Henderson's house, finding my parents quarter jar they hid, need I go on?"

"Whatever, just, I'll see you there, okay?"

"Yeah! See you, Mike! Over and out."

X

The boys were at the arcade, parking their bikes when the car

honked, revealing Will and Joyce waving at them.

"Hey!"

"Hey, guys, where's Jess?" Dustin asked, not hearing someone jump from the roof of the arcade.

"BOO!"

The boys screamed, turning to see Jess burst out laughing.

Dustin froze when he saw that with paired with her outfit for the day...

Was the hat he had given to her when she was in the hospital.

"Jess! Can you STOP scaring us with you randomly jumping from roofs?!" Lucas whined.

"I don't know, it's kinda cool," Dustin admitted, smiling at the Colombian.

She grins.

"Thanks, Dustin! And to answer your question Lucas, nope. Now come on! Let's go slay the dragon!" she laughs, readjusting the hat on her head, running in the arcade.

Mike and Lucas looked at Dustin with raised eyebrows.

"What?"

"I don't know, it's kinda cool.' Seriously Dustin?! Just ask her out already!" Lucas exclaims, as if he already told him this a million times.

Dustin turned bright red as they entered the arcade.

X

"To slay the dragon, use the magic sword."

"Oh, Jesus! I'm in uncharted territory here, guys." Dustin says,

playing *Dragon's Lair*.

"Down! Down! Down!"

"I'm going! I'm going!"

Jess was leaning in, shaking his shoulder as he played and he tried to focus on the game and not how close she was to his face.

The princess exclaimed.

"I'm going! I'm going! I'm going!"

They all started clamoring.

"Okay. Shut up. Shut up. Shut up!"

He clicked on the sword button, only to be blown into flames.

"No. No. No!" he yelled as the knight died.

"No! No! No! I hate this overpriced bullshit! Son of a bitch! Piece of shit!" he shouted, hitting the arcade game.

"You're not nimble enough. But you'll get there one day. But until then, Princess Daphne is still mine." Lucas says, causing Jess to laugh.

"Whatever. I'm still top on *Centipede*." Dustin says.

"And I'm top on *Dig Dug*!" Jess laughed, high-fiving Dustin.

"You sure about that?"

The Party turns to see Keith, smirking at them.

"Sure about what?" Dustin asked.

Keith munched on his Cheeto Puffs.

Jess and Dustin looked at each other and they both ran to where *Centipede* and *Dig Dug* was.

"You're kidding me. No, no, no."

"Oh, god, please no!"

"Move! Move! No, no, no, no, no." Dustin says.

"Hey, no! No! No!" Jess wailed, causing the boys to run up to where *Dig Dug* was, seeing her name, *GRLPWR* was in second place to *MADMAX*.

"751,300 points!"

"That's impossible," Mike says.

"Who is Mad Max?" Dustin asked.

"Better than her."

Dustin and Jess flipped him off.

"Is it you?"

Keith scoffs.

"You know I despise *Dig Dug*."

"Then who is it?"

"Yeah, spill it, Keith," Dustin exclaimed.

"You want information, then I need something in return."

The boys turned to Mike and Jess, who scoffed, shaking her head at them.

"No, no, no. No way. You're not getting a date with her." Mike says, Jess, standing next to him.

"Yeah, fucking hell no." she hissed.

"Mike, come on. Just get him the date."

"He's not prostituting our sister!" Jess exclaimed.

"Yeah, I'm not prostituting our sister!" Mike yelled, completely

unaware they called Nancy 'their' sister.

"But it's for a good cause."

"No, don't give him the date. You know what? He's gonna spread his nasty-ass rash to your whole family."

Jess snorted and giggled at Dustin's comment.

"Acne isn't a rash and it isn't contagious, you prepubescent wastoid."

Jess flipped him off again.

"Oh, I'm a wastoid? She wouldn't go on a date with you. You make, like, what? \$2.50 an hour."

"Nice perm."

"Gonna make fun of my hair?"

Jess rolled her eyes at the argument, walking towards Mike who was subconsciously playing with his bracelet.

She laid her head on his shoulder, watching as the boys bickered.

She turned to see Will leave the arcade.

She furrowed her eyebrows, motioning for Mike to follow her.

They followed Will outside where he was looking out into the sky.

"Will!"

Will gasped, turning to Mike and Jess.

"¿Estas bien? (Are you okay?)" Jess asked.

Will looked out to the sky again, causing Jess to frown.

"Yeah. I just...I needed some air."

Mike walked up to him, placing his arm around his shoulders.

"Come on. You're up on *Dig Dug*." Mike says.

"Yeah, let's see if you can beat MadMax." Jess grinned, squeezing his hand.

"Let's take top score back, huh?" Mike says, making Will smile at the two.

"Yeah, lets."

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

The boys and Jess are introduced to a new girl in science class, and Jess can't help but not like this 'Max'.

They were all in science class, going over the brain.

"Meet the human brain."

Mike, Lucas, Dustin, and Jess perks up, paying close attention.

"I know. I know, it doesn't look like much. A little gross even, right? But consider this. There are a hundred billion cells inside of this miracle of evolution. All working as one. No, no, I did not misspeak. I did not stutter. A hundred billion."

A door closed, causing everyone to turn to see a new girl with red hair come in with the principal.

"Ah, this must be our new student."

"Indeed it is. All yours."

"All right. Hold up. You don't get away that easy." Mr. Clarke says as the girl attempts to walk to an empty desk.

"Come on up. Don't be shy. Dustin, Jess, drum roll."

The two grin at each other as they closed their books, patting on them.

"Class, please welcome, all the way from sunny California, the latest passenger to join us on our curiosity voyage, Maxine."

They ended the drumroll with a tap.

"It's Max." The girl corrected.

Dustin's grin faded into realization.

"Sorry?"

"Nobody calls me Maxine. It's Max."

"Mad Max," Lucas whispered to Dustin and Jess.

"Well, all aboard, Max."

The four boys turned in sync to watch the girl named 'Max' sit down.

Jess rolled her eyes.

They were like that when she went to elementary and she stated that she liked playing games and hated girly stuff.

It was rare to find a girl like that.

Max sat down, watching as 4 boys looked at her.

She debated on giving them the finger when the girl, 'Jess' hit the boy with the hat, 'Dustin' - they were wearing similar hats - on the shoulder, causing all of them to turn, faces red.

The girl sighed before looking back at her.

Max didn't know what it was about Jess that made her feel intimidated, but she already liked her.

She made those four boys look away with just a hit on the shoulder.

She froze when Jess narrowed her eyes, her frown deepening before turning her attention to Mr. Clarke.

Why did she get the feeling she was just eye-threatened by the girl?

X

"There's no way that's Mad Max," Mike says, watching her skateboard.

"Yeah. Girls don't play video games." Will said.

"Excuse me?"

The boys screamed, catching Max's attention, her eyes widening a bit when she saw Jess hanging upside down from the roof of the ticket building, her upper body where the boys were.

"Holy shit, that's awesome," she mumbled.

"Jess! T-That's not what I meant! I swear!" Will stammered as Jess raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah! He just means that they can't get 750,000 points on *Dig Dug*. It's impossible." Mike says, unknowingly burying himself deeper into the grave he was in.

"Uh, I beat her score with 980,000 points." she shot at him, causing him to pale.

"And besides, her name is Max," she says, shrugging.

"So what?"

"So, how many Maxes do you know?" Lucas asks, watching her.

"I don't know."

"Zero. That's how many."

"She shows up at school the day after someone with her name breaks our top score. I mean, are you kidding me?" Dustin says, making Jess feel a bit jealous.

"Yeah, and I DESTROYED her score afterward." she bites, Mike noticing and giving her a small smile.

But Lucas and Dustin doesn't hear her.

"Exactly. So she's gotta be Mad Max. She's gotta be." Lucas says.

"Plus she skateboards, so she's pretty awesome."

Jess and Mike widened their eyes at each other.

Jess felt a huge surge of jealousy hit her.

"Awesome? You haven't even spoken a word to her." Mike exclaims, Jess, noticing how angry and annoyed he sounded.

There was no reason for him to be upset about Dustin making a comment about the girl.

"I don't have to. I mean, look at her." Dustin says, turning back to see the redhead.

Jess bit her lip, looking at Mike, who noticed she had dropped the hat she was holding in her hands.

He frowned, picking it up for her and handing it back.

She grabs it and sighs.

"Shit, I've lost the target."

"Oh! There." Will says.

The boys watched her leave, flinching slightly when Jess landed in front of Dustin, adjusting the hat on her head.

Dustin looked over at her and blushed at her hard face.

Max dropped a paper in the trash, making all of them look at each other before running towards the trash, Jess getting there first.

Jess flipped off the girls that looked at the boys weird, glaring at them while the boys waved.

One of them tripped over her own feet, causing Mike to widen his eyes and giggle.

He turned to Jess who made a show of wiping her nose.

He rolled his eyes, smiling at her.

"Got it! There we go." Dustin says, holding the piece of paper.

He unfolds it to read;

"Stop spying on me, creeps." They all say, making Jess burst out laughing.

"Well, shit." Dustin mumbles.

"Don't worry Dustin, there are cooler girls out there," Jess says, causing Dustin to look up.

"I guess you're right Jess. We have you," he says, without thinking.

Jess' cheeks went red, smiling big.

The jealousy disappeared momentarily.

"William Byers."

They turned to see the principal.

"Your mother's here."

Will frowned, nodding.

"Say hi to Mama Byers for me, okay?" Jess says, smiling at him.

"Yeah, sure Jess."

She sighed as Will leaves with the principal.

She knew he hated when people treated him like a baby so she didn't.

She still threatened him when he made a wrong comment about something.

She always came over to listen to the latest mixtape that Jonathan made Will.

She still acted like his sister.

"You guys think he's okay?" Dustin asked as they watched him from the schoolyard.

"He's always weird when he has to go in." Lucas states.

"I don't know. He's quiet today." Mike says, Jess, nodding in agreement.

"He's always quiet." Lucas states.

"Not like this," Jess mumbled, Mike nodding.

He was never this quiet.

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike and Jess rummage through his old toys and call El for the 352nd day in a row.

After dinner, I want you to pick out your toys for the yard sale."

Jess was at the Wheeler's for dinner tonight, as it was their turn to make sure she had dinner before she went home.

The day before yesterday it was the Sinclair's, where she laughed at Lucas' sister trying to embarrass him by telling her stuff she already knew about him.

But, whenever she was at the Wheeler's for dinner now, instead of the usual bickering of Nancy and Mike, causing her to giggle and gossip with his sister, everyone ate with a thick tension in the air.

She HATED dinners there now.

"Fine," Mike mumbled, causing Jess to frown and grip his hand tightly, the one with the bracelet.

"Two boxes' worth."

"Two boxes?" Mike asked.

"You heard me."

"I'm fine with you giving away a couple, but the other ones have way too much emotional value," Mike argued.

Jess nodded, knowing some of the toys he had were ones she first played with when she first went to his house for a playdate.

"It's true, Mrs. Wheeler. Some of them do."

"Emotional value?" Mrs. Wheeler asks, raising an eyebrow.

"They're hunks of plastic, Michael." Mr. Wheeler says, causing Jess to glare at him.

"You already took away my Atari," Mike exclaimed.

"Didn't wanna lose more toys, you shouldn't have stolen from Nancy...or Jess."

Jess rolled her eyes.

"He didn't steal my photo album, I gave it to him." she lied for Mike, knowing the real reason why he took it.

"Yeah! I didn't steal. I borrowed." Mike argued.

"Oh, and you didn't curse out Mr. Kowalski last week either, right?" she says, causing Mike to roll his eyes.

"HE INSULTED STEPHEN KING'S 'CARRIE'!!" Jess exclaimed, her fists tightening as she remembered him calling the telekinetic character pathetic and couldn't handle herself.

Mike just beat her to the punch with cursing him out.

Well, she DID flip him off when they were dismissed.

"Or plagiarize that essay?"

Jess rolled her eyes, finding it ridiculous they were bringing something from last school year up.

"Or graffiti the bathroom stall?"

"Everyone graffitis the bathroom stall," Mike says.

"So if your friend here jumps off a cliff, you're gonna jump, too?" Mr. Wheeler asks.

Jess snorted, smirking at Mike who rolled his eyes.

How ironic they've 'been there, done that'.

"Yes, he will, because friends stick together, no matter what," Jess

says, causing Mike to smile at her, squeezing her hand.

Mrs. Wheeler chose to ignore her comment.

"We know you've had a hard year, Michael. But we've been patient. I mean, even Jessica's been letting her stress out in a positive way."

Jess sent a deadly glare at her.

"Mike's not me, Mrs. Wheeler. So please, be kind to not compare us."

Mrs. Wheeler sighs.

"This isn't strike one. This isn't even strike three."

"It's strike 20. You're on the bench, son. And if it'd been my coach, you'd be lucky to still be on the team."

Mike and Jess looked at each other, furrowing their eyebrows.

"Two boxes. Two."

Mike sighed, stabbing onto a piece of meat while Jess grabbed her cup of milk, rolling her eyes as she sipped.

Yup, dinner at the Wheeler's were no longer a joy.

X

Jess was helping Mike choose the toys he was going to give away in the basement, now feeling a bit more at home down there than upstairs.

She froze when Mike held onto Rory, looking at it.

She swallowed as he pressed the button to make it roar, tears watering her eyes.

She took it from him and kissed it, placing it beside her, not bearing to have him give it up.

They showed *her* that toy.

She turned to see Mike pick up the toy Falcon, Jess faintly hearing Dustin trying to convince *her* to make it fly.

Mike sighed, before turning to look ahead of her.

Jess turned, knowing he was looking at *her* fort.

She gulped, stroking her necklace.

"You wanna talk to her with me today?" Mike asked, still looking at the fort.

"Not today. I'll contact her when I get home. I think today you need to rant by yourself." Jess answered, her fingers still playing with the necklace.

"Can you stay with me just in case?" he asked.

She looked at him, smiling painfully.

"Of course."

He sighed, looking down before setting the Falcon down, grabbing Jess' hand as they both walked under the fort, sitting down.

Jess handed Mike his Supercomm, laying on his shoulder as he turned to the channel he now uses.

He pulled up the antenna.

"El, are you there? El?" he asked.

Jess sighed as she heard the static, used to the feeling of her not responding.

"It's me. It's Mike. It's day 352, 7:40 p.m.....I'm still here."

Jess couldn't believe it was that long since that day in 1983.

"If you're out there, say something. Or give me a sign. I won't even say anything. Just...I wanna know if you're okay."

Jess looked up, her eyebrows furrowing in worry.

Normally, Mike would tell her about his day, while ranting about something bad that may have happened.

But, apparently, today wasn't one of those days.

Mike was desperate for El to respond in some way or another.

Jess couldn't blame him.

She was desperate too.

Mike looked at the Supercomm with disappointment when there was no reply, sighing sadly.

"I'm so stupid."

Jess widened her eyes when Mike got up.

"Mike..." she says, walking up to him, grabbing his arm when...

"Mike."

They froze, gasping when the voice didn't stop there.

"Jessie."

They looked at each other before running back to the fort, Mike grabbing the Supercomm again.

"Mike?"

"Hello, hello is that you?" Mike asks, his eyes sparkling with hope, looking at Jess who also had that sparkle.

"Yeah, it's me Dustin."

The sparkle in their eyes vanished, Jess laying her head on Mike's shoulder as tears ran down her cheeks.

"What're you doing on this channel again? I've been trying to reach you all day. We were right. Max is Mad Max."

Jess sniffed, holding onto Mike's arm, fidgeting with her necklace.

"Yeah, I'm busy," Mike says, annoyance in his voice.

"But-"

He slides down the antenna, sighing.

Jess wiped her eyes, lifting her head.

Mike laid down her lap, causing her to play with his hair as he tried not to burst into tears.

"That was El, I know it," he says, his voice cracking.

"I know. I heard her too." Jess mumbled.

X

Jess was putting on her backpack, hugging Mike goodbye when a car came by.

"That'll be Papa Hopper. See you tomorrow Mike."

He nodded, smiling sadly at her.

She smiles back before running out the door, grinning at the Chief.

"Papa Hopper!"

"Hey kid." he greets as she ran towards him, hugging him as he rubbed her back.

"Day interesting?"

She shrugged.

"If you count there's a new girl at school interesting."

He chuckled as he lifted her bike in the back of his truck, watching her run to the car, sitting at the shotgun.

In the year that passed, an unlikely bond was grown with the Colombian 13-year-old and the Chief of Police.

He taught her how to shoot properly, and gave her fighting tips on how to defend herself.

He also helped her get home when it got dark so what happened to Will won't happen to her.

In other words, they grew a bond.

X

"So, anything interesting happened at the Wheeler's?"

Jess groaned, rolling her eyes.

"Mike's being punished for just borrowing a couple coins from Nancy. He said he'll pay her back. And I know Mike, he doesn't break his promises."

Hopper chuckled at the girl.

"How about you? Didn't do anything stupid to yourself did you?"

Jess was quiet, hating the question.

"I haven't done anything stupid to my skin since-"

"Ok, ok. I get it. A no would do. May I see them?"

Jess hesitated before pulling up her sleeve, scars scattering all over them.

"Still the same as last week. Good job kid, didn't go back to your habit."

"It was a one-time thing, Hopper, alright?" Jess snapped, sighing.

It suddenly got quiet.

"Sorry, I just...you know I was in a bad place mentally when I caused self-harm," she mumbled.

Hopper nodded.

"I get it."

X

Hopper waved goodbye to Jess as she waved back, pushing her bike into the garage, closing it.

He sighed, driving off, making his way back to the cabin that no one but two people knew about.

And he was one of those people.

X

He was driving the car through the forest, parking a couple feet away from his destination.

He looked over to see Jess had left her Walkman and her headphones, causing him to pick them up before he got out of the car.

Might as well let her listen to what Jess had in the mixtape before giving it back to her tomorrow.

He walked through the forest, his flashlight on as he stepped over a wire, walking to the cabin ahead.

He walked up the stairs and towards the door.

.../...

US

The door is unlocked from the other side, allowing him to enter.

He opens the door walking in and closing the door.

He puts up his hat and jacket, setting the Walkman and headphones on the couch.

He turns off the TV, sighing.

He removed his belt that contained the revolver, setting it on the

counter.

He went to the fridge, opening it to grab a beer, opening it and sipping it.

He walked to the table, sighing when he saw the Eggos on the plate.

"Hey, what'd we talk about?" he asked.

"No signal." was the reply.

He sat on the chair.

"What?"

"No signal. It's 8-1-5. You're late." the voice answered, sounding a bit annoyed.

"Yeah, I lost track of time driving Jessica back to her house. I'll signal next time when I drop her off, all right?"

He looks over as a figure walked over.

"Uh, and it's 8:15. It's not 8-1-5," he says.

El sat across from him, her overalls and sweater that she was wearing from a yard sale Hopper bought from a couple months ago fitting her perfectly, her dark brown curls framing her face.

"Eight-fifteen."

"Now, what did we talk about?" Hopper asked, pointing at the Eggos.

"Dinner first, then dessert. Always."

El sighed, playing with her necklace.

"That's a rule. Yeah?"

El nodded.

"Yes."

They faintly smile at each other before taking off the aluminum foil off their dinner, digging in.

X

El sighed as she picked up the Walkman from the couch, smiling at it.

"Make sure you give it back to me tomorrow, alright? You know how Jess loves her music."

"Yes."

She placed the headphones on, playing the Walkman, listening as Madonna started singing *Borderline* on it.

She smiled as she walked to her room sitting on her bed as she played with her bracelet, rubbing the *MIKE* and *JESS* names and their charms on her bracelet.

It was an interesting day, to say the least for everyone in Hawkins.

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

On November 12, 1983, El left the Upside Down.

On November 12, 1983, El went back to Mike's house, only for the bad men to be there first, interrogating him and Jessie.

On November 12, 1983, El escaped to the forest, to keep the boy and girl she cared about safe.

On November 12, 1983, El stayed away from her home.

November 12, 1983

"Goodbye, Mike...Jessie."

El was screaming, her hand out as she focused all her energy on killing the Demogorgon, disintegrating in the process.

X

El opened her eyes, coughing out a liquid.

She stood up, looking around the classroom.

Only, it wasn't the classroom Jessie and the boys took her in to hide.

It was the Upside Down's version of it.

She walked out the classroom, looking around.

For two people.

She leaned against the wall, groaning.

"El?! EL!"

"EL! iONCE!"

"Mike? Jessie?" she called weakly, looking around.

She wanted them.

She kept on walking, looking around.

She felt a heavy weight on her chest as she kept on looking.

"EL!"

"iONCE!"

"Mike? Jessie?" she called again, getting more frantic, looking around, breathing heavily.

"EL!!!"

"EL! iONCE!"

"Mike? Jessie? MIKE! JESSIE!" she called, now screaming out for them, tears streaming down.

"EL, WHERE ARE YOU?!"

"ONCE!! ONCE, i¿DONDE ESTAS?!"

"MIKE!!! JESSIE!!!" she screamed, tears blurring her vision, panting unevenly.

"Eleven?! El?!"

"iONCE! EL!"

"MIKE!! JESSIE!!" She screamed, stopping when she turned into a corner.

She whimpered, panting uneasily.

She suddenly remembered something from the back her head, something Jessie told her, but her voice sounded younger.

"If you're stuck in a situation where you can't seem to get out of, first, relax and breathe calmly. Don't panic."

So, she relaxed, breathing in and out calmly, calming down a bit.

She heard a wail, scream of agony, causing her to look up.

It sounded faint, but she heard it from somewhere.

She turned, following the source of the sound, now hearing shouts.

She turned to see a small portal, somewhere she can leave the Upside Down.

She started to walk towards it, breathing in and out calmly, reminding herself not to panic.

As she got near, she looked through the red substance that was separating the Upside Down and the real world from each other.

A soldier looked through as well, causing her to gasp and hide.

"Bravo team, check in."

El started to breathe heavily, hoping that they had moved on.

She swallowed, pressing her hand against the red substance, pushing it until her arm was out into the real school hallway.

She drew her arm back in, gasping.

She can get out.

She looked towards it and sighed, backing up a bit.

Using the last bit of her energy, she glared at the exit, drawing her hand out, making the hole bigger, so she can fit through it.

She put her arm down and walked to the whole, pushing on it until she got out, collapsing on the floor.

She was out.

She was slimy and dirty but, she was out.

She panted, looking towards the door at the end of the hallway.

She got up and walked towards it, one thing on her mind.

Get to Mike and Jessie and reassure them she's okay.

Tired, yes.

Drained, yes.

But, okay.

X

She was almost there, she was almost home as she walked through the forest (it was safer that way) to get to Mike's.

To home.

She froze when she saw the house, the bad men's cars lining up on the driveway.

As she walked up to see the house, the bad men that were in the house were searching everywhere, looking to see if their 'experiment' was there.

"What about the Russians? What if they come looking for her?" Mrs. Wheeler was asking them.

"They don't know where she is." one says, 'reassuring' her.

"And she can't contact you without us knowing."

"The most important thing is for you to try to go on with your lives and to keep all of this-"

"Top secret. Yeah." Mr. Wheeler says, saluting him.

"Understood. We're all patriots in this house."

However, the bad men with Mike and Jess?

Well, they were getting frustrated with the two.

"Go back to the beginning."

"We told you everything." Mike snapped, Jess laying her head on his shoulder.

"I understand this is difficult Michael and Jessica."

Jess rolled her eyes.

"We don't know where she is," Mike told them, holding onto Jess' hand.

"And even if we did, we'd never tell you. We would never tell you," he added, glaring at them.

El had walked up the window, gasping at the sight of Mike and Jessie being interrogated and lied to.

"I know it's difficult to accept, the stories she told you were not true. She's a very dangerous individual."

"Y-Y-Y-You're l-l-l-lying," Jess growled, glaring at them, making the woman tense, as if she was scared she'll do something.

"If she contacts you, either of you, you both must tell us."

Mike turned to look out the window, tensing and elbowing Jess, her eyes darting to the window as well, drowning out what the man was saying.

They saw El.

Mike furrowed his eyebrows together, tears forming again.

Jess let her tears run down her cheeks, holding onto her necklace and rubbing it lovingly, her lips trembling.

El furrowed her eyebrows, tears forming again.

She can't go to them.

As much as it physically and mentally hurt to admit that to herself, she can't.

She would only endanger them.

She watched as Mike and Jessie looked at her with longing and sadness, her heart breaking at having to leave them for who knows how long.

She closed her eyes, tears running down her cheeks as she looked at them in real life for possibly the last time in her life.

The man who was talking to them turned and contacted everyone to search outside.

But, El had already hidden, hiding under a log in the forest as they searched for her.

She was crying, rubbing the '*MIKE*' and '*JESS*' charms on her bracelet, waiting for the men to pass where she was hiding, shivering in the cold, forcing herself to stay awake until they left, so she would at least know it was safe.

She missed them.

She missed Mike.

She missed Jessie.

She missed home.

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

It's Halloween, and to El's disappointment, she can't go trick-or-treating. But, after learning what a compromise is and making one with Hopper, she's satisfied.

The boys arrive at school as the Ghostbusters, waiting for Jess to show up in her school costume, but her outfit isn't what's shocking at all.

October 31, 1984

It was the morning of Halloween, and Hopper was making breakfast for him and El in the cabin.

He turned and jumped in surprise.

"Oh, Jesus!"

It was El, with a white sheet over her with two eyeholes cut in.

She was dressed as a ghost.

"Ghost." She states, smiling under the sheet.

"Yeah, I see that," Hopper says, taking the pan to the table.

"Halloween." She says, proud that she remembered.

Jessie and Mike had been talking about their *Ghostbusters* costumes for months.

Jessie was going as the marshmallow monster from the movie, according to Mike when he talked about it.

So, naturally, she wanted to be a ghost.

Because if Mike was going as someone who catches ghosts, she

wanted him to catch her.

"Sure is. But right now, it's breakfast, okay? Come on, let's eat."

"They won't see me." She says, looking at him.

"Who wouldn't see you?" Hopper asked as he brought their plates to the table.

"The bad men."

"What are you talking about?"

"Trick or Treat." She says, remembering what it meant.

Jessie explained to her last month that Trick-or-Treating was when you go up to a house and knock on the door and when someone answers, you call out, "Trick or Treat!" and they usually give a prize, normally candy.

Hopper looked at her.

"You want to go trick-or-treating?" he asks.

El nodded.

She really did want to go.

Not only for the candy, but, for the chance she might bump into Mike and Jessie, or at least see them.

Hopper stood up.

"You know the rules."

El frowned.

"Yes, but-"

"Yeah, so you know the answer."

No, she HAD to go trick-or-treating.

"No, but they wouldn't see me." She says, trying to reason with him.

She NEEDED to see them.

A glance at least.

"No. Hey. I don't care."

"But, they wouldn't see me." She says, now referring to not only the bad men but to Mike and Jessie.

She wasn't going to reveal herself, she just wanted to at least see them in real life.

"I don't care, all right? You go out there, ghost or not, it's a risk. We don't take risks. All right?"

El frowned, hating the fact that he was right.

"They're stupid, and..."

"We're not stupid!" She says, gritting her teeth.

"Exactly. Now you take that off, sit down and eat. Your food's getting cold."

El bit her lip before sighing, throwing the sheet off her.

She sat on her chair, giving Hopper the 'parents are so stupid ugh' look.

Hopper looked up and saw El scowling at the floor, immediately seeing Jess when she first was opposed to the arrangement of Hopper driving her back to her house.

He sighed.

"All right, look...How about I get off early tonight, and I buy us a bunch of candy, and we can sit around and get fat, and we watch a scary movie together?" he suggests, now catching her attention.

"How's that for a compromise?"

"C-Compromise?" El asks.

"C-O-M-promise. Compromise."

El tensed when he said promise in the spelling.

"How about that's your word for the day? Yeah? It's something that's kinda in-between. It's like halfway happy."

"By 5-1-5?" El asks, looking at him.

"5:15. Yeah, sure."

She shrugs.

She hesitated before looking at him.

"Promise?"

"Yes. I promise."

She let a small smile appear on her lips.

"Halfway happy." She says, shrugging.

She grabs her fork, starting to eat.

Hopper leans in and ruffles her hair, causing her to chuckle.

They smile at each other before continuing on with their breakfast.

X

The boys were singing the theme song to *Ghostbusters*, wearing their costumes.

Jess had told them that she wasn't going to wear hers because she wasn't going to waste time putting on makeup that's just going to get ruined halfway through the school day.

But, she WAS going to school in a costume, just what it was was unknown to them.

"Who you gonna call?" The three of them sang as they parked their bikes.

"Ghostbusters!" Will sings, causing the boys to turn around.

"Hey, Spengler!"

"Egon! Yeah!"

"Venkman!"

"Yeah!"

"Whoa! Whoa!" Mike says, pointing at Lucas' costume.

"What?"

"Why are you Venkman?"

"Because I'm Venkman."

"No, I'm Venkman."

"See Dustin I told you, they would do this."

The boys jumped to see Jess, smirking at them.

Mike rolled his eyes at her costume.

"You're going as Dustin, Jess? Really?"

She shrugged.

"Why not?" She says, making Dustin blush.

"Do an impression of me!"

Jess turned to Dustin and purred at him, causing Lucas to groan.

"Can you resist these pearls?" She imitates him, remembering the first time he purred at her.

Dustin turned bright red, grinning.

Will turned the subject back to the fact there were two Venkmans.

"Why can't there just be two Venkmans?"

"Because there's only one Venkman in real life. We planned this months ago. I'm Venkman, Dustin's Stantz, you're Egon, and you're Winston." Mike argues.

"And Jess is the glorious Marshmallow monster!" Dustin exclaims.

"Just you wait though, they MIGHT make a movie with GIRL Ghostbusters in the future and you can bet your asses I'm dressing up as one of them," Jess announces.

Mike and Lucas don't hear them though.

"I specifically didn't agree to Winston," Lucas says.

"Yes, you did!" Mike exclaimed.

"I don't think he did," Will says.

"No one wants to be Winston, man. Even Jess told me she'd rather die at the hands of the Demogorgon than be Winston when I asked her."

Mike shot a shocked look at Jess' direction and she rose her arms in defense.

"He's not lying."

"What's wrong with Winston?"

"What's wrong with Winston? He joined the team super late, he's not funny, and he's not even a scientist!"

"Yeah, but he's still cool," Mike says.

"If he's cool, then you be Winston."

"I can't!"

"Why not?" Lucas asked.

"B-B-Because..." Mike stuttered.

"B-B-B-Because you're not black?" Lucas mocked Mike before accusing him.

Jess widened her eyes, snorting at Lucas for calling him out.

"I didn't say that!"

"You thought it."

Jess looked to see that Dustin had turned to look at the kids coming out of the school bus.

"Guys...Guys! Guys!"

Jess walked up to him, her eyes widening at the sight.

"Why is no one else wearing costumes?"

Jess frowned, knowing she was fine as she had decided to go as Dustin which was wearing her hat he had given her, her AV Club hoodie and a pair of jeans and converse.

The boys, however, weren't as lucky.

"Crap," Lucas says.

Crap indeed.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess almost gets hit by a car at the last minute, and El has a flashback to when she was in the woods.

Students were laughing at the boys, Mike having to grab Jess' hand so she wouldn't use her powers on them.

"Oh my god!"

"When do people make these decisions?" Dustin asked.

"Everyone dressed up last year," Will says.

"It's a conspiracy, I'm telling you," Dustin says.

"Just be cool."

"Who you gonna call? The nerds!"

Jess made a motion with her elbow, the boy explaining in shock as another kid pushed him into the ground after tripping his own feet.

Mike rolled his eyes as Jess reached to wipe her nose, looking at her hand when she lowered it, freezing.

"Jess?"

She looked at Mike and showed him her hand.

"No blood."

Mike widened his eyes, looking at her.

Jess smiled.

"I've gotten stronger."

Mike grinned.

"Do you think we can try tonight after Trick or Treating?"

Jess frowned.

"Tomorrow, I think. I'll probably be too tired after Trick-Or-Treating to try to make contact. After all, El couldn't contact Will when she was tired. And we're NOT making a makeshift sensory deprivation tank again." She whispered to him, to make sure no one else heard.

Mike sighed, but nodded.

"Hey, it's just one more day to see if I can make contact. We can be patient for one more day." Jess reassured him.

He nodded, smiling at her before looking down at her arms.

"How are you going to explain..."

Jess tensed, pulling up her sleeve, her eyes on the scars.

She sighed, pulling the sleeve back down.

"The truth. I was going through a really bad time mentally at the time and I stupidly self-harmed myself rather than turning to my friends because I thought they wouldn't understand."

Mike nodded before hugging her.

"I'm just waiting for the day I can look at them and not be disgusted and hide them." She sighs, hugging back.

Mike just hugged her tighter, sighing.

"It'll get better, I promise."

Jess nodded.

"I'm counting on it."

X

El was watching TV, tilting her head to change the channel.

She changed the channel again, keeping it where a Soap was playing.

"Well, I'm stunned. I don't know what to think."

"Don't you love me?"

"Of course I love you. It's just that it's so sudden. I mean, it's not like you."

"Erica, I am this way because of you."

"Me?"

"Me?" El imitates 'Erica', placing her hand on her chest.

"Mmm-hmm. You have made me wild and impetuous, just like you."

"Impetuous," El repeated, reminding herself to look that word up.

"People are going to be aghast."

"People are going to be aghast," El repeated.

"They're gonna love it."

El heard chirping, turning her head from the TV.

She walked up to the window, pulling up the fold covering the window.

She saw a squirrel, causing her to tense, getting a flashback.

A month after leaving the Upside Down...

El was walking in the snow, her fingers feeling as if they were frozen from the cold.

She noticed a squirrel ahead and with a tilt of her head, the squirrel flew towards a tree, killing it.

Blood ran down her nose as she walked up to it, grabbing it.

She sighs, running her free hand through her hair that had grown in the past month.

X

She was cooking the squirrel, her sunken in eyes from crying watching as she tilted the stick around and around.

A twig snaps, causing her to whip her head around, seeing a man with a gun.

She inhaled shakily, reminding herself to remain calm.

"Hey. I'm not gonna hurt you."

She clenched her hands, rubbing the charms on her bracelet.

"What's your name?"

He continued walking up to her.

"What are you doing out here in the cold?"

El made the burning squirrel fly up, knocking the man on the face unconscious.

She ran towards the man and pulled off his jacket and took his hat, putting them on and running away.

She rubbed her necklace, closing her eyes as tears ran down her cheeks.

That rifle he was carrying...looked like Jessie's rifle.

Back to present...

El sighed, pulling down the fold.

X

"Really, everyone dressed up last year." Dustin was saying as he, Mike, Lucas, and Jess were riding their bikes.

"Honestly, Why didn't anyone say anything?" Jess agrees with him, her hair flying behind her, Dustin's hat in her backpack as it was getting windy and she didn't want it flying off her head.

Dustin turned to look back when he heard something.

"Hey, guys?"

They turned and Jess gasped, horrification on her face as a car drove up, making no move to turn the other way.

"HOLY FUCKING SHIT!!! PEDAL FASTER!" She screamed, pedaling faster.

"Go!"

"Mike, you need to haul ass!" Dustin yelled.

Jess suddenly fell off her bike, rolling towards the car.

"JESSICA!!" The boys screamed.

She looked up at the car coming towards her, paralyzed in horror as she remembered seeing Gabriella getting hit by a car.

The car suddenly swerved to the left, barely missing Jess.

"Whoa! Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!"

Jess gasped in horror, tears streaming down as she crawled into a ball.

"JESSICA!"

She looked up to see Mike run up to her, helping her up.

"M-M-M-Mike. T-T-T-The c-c-c-c-car a-a-a-almost h-h-h-hit m-m-me." She stuttered, shaking violently as he dragged her away from the road.

Mike hugged her tightly, glaring at the car as it passed.

"Jessica!"

Jess is dragged from Mike's arms and into Dustin's as the shock left her body and she started to sob, hugging Dustin, pressing her face against his chest.

He held onto her as Lucas rolled her bike from the road, pushing it aside as he walked up to her and hugged her as well.

"You're okay. You're safe. I got you." Dustin whispers to her, Mike walking towards them and joining the group hug, as Jess' breathing slowly became calmer.

She was safe.

She was okay.

7. Chapter 7

Summary for the Chapter:

The gang goes trick-or-treating, and someone joins them, much to Mike's and Jess' disappointment.

Hopper breaks his promise to El about getting off early.

"Will, hey!" Mike yelled, waving to the car.

The boys had just started Trick-Or-Treating, Jess saying that she'll be there right when she finished putting on her Marshmallow Monster costume.

"Hey, don't cross the streams. Don't cross the streams." Dustin says, making Mike laugh.

"Hey boys!"

The boys turned to see Jess in her costume, Dustin widening his eyes at her makeup, her black eyeshadow making her blue eyes pop out.

Not to mention, her whole Sailor costume looked great on her.

"You look great Jess!" Mike says, causing her to laugh.

"You should have seen me almost getting into a fight with my make up! Honestly, how do the other girls do it?"

"It's probably because they're trying to hide their ugly faces. You, on the other hand, don't need to. Besides, the eyeshadow doesn't hide anything, it makes your blue eyes pop." Dustin says, causing Jess to blush a deep shade of red.

Mike and Lucas rolled their eyes, smirking at Dustin when Jess walked over and kissed his cheek, grinning at him before looking up.

"Hey, Will!"

The boys turned to see Will had left the car.

"Will!" Lucas yelled.

"Egon!"

"Yeah! You ready for tonight, man?"

"Yeah, I'm ready!"

"Awesome!"

"Alright then..."

Jess ran to the next house, yelling;

"Let's GET SOME FUCKING CANDY!!"

X

Jess rang the doorbell, giggling.

The door opens.

"Trick or Treat!" They all simultaneously say.

The woman chuckled.

"Oh! Well, aren't you cute? The four little exterminators and sailor."

The grins faded, all of them looking at each other until Jess gasped, hitting Dustin lightly to show that in her bowl of candy were all Three Musketeers.

They each grabbed a handful.

As they left the house, Lucas sighed.

"If I get another 3 Musketeers, I'm gonna kill myself," he says, getting a look from Jess.

"What's wrong with 3 Musketeers?" Dustin asks.

"What's wrong with 3 Musketeers?!" Lucas exclaims.

"No one wants 3 Musketeers," Mike says.

"Yeah, it's just nougat." Will agreed.

"Whoa, hey, JUST nougat?!" Jess exclaimed.

"Whoa. 'Just nougat'? Just nougat? It is top three for me." Dustin agreed.

"Top three?" Mike asked.

"Top three!" Dustin confirms.

"Oh, God. Give me a break," Mike says.

"Well, it's number two in my book. Right after Twix." Jess grinned.

Dustin grinned at her.

"Seriously, I can just eat a whole bowl of nougat. Straight up."

Suddenly a person in a Michael Myers costume jumped them, causing all of the boys to scream.

Jess, however, rolled her eyes.

"You can cut it out now, whoever you are." She says, but a smile and a giggle came out of her.

The person growled at her and she laughed, finding it so funny.

Suddenly, the person in the Michael Myers costume laughed, pulling up their mask to reveal-

"Holy shit! You should have seen the look on your faces." Max says, causing the smile to drop from Jess' face, turning to Mike who sighed, looking at her and rolling his eyes.

"And you?" Max adds, looking at Lucas.

"Who screams like that? You sound like a little girl."

"And you," Max continued, looking at Jess.

"My respect for you has grown! How the fuck were you not scared?"

Jess walked up to her and looked at her straight in the eyes.

"Things like TV or Movie villains don't scare me...at least not anymore as of November 12, 1983." She spoke in a monotone voice, turning back to Mike, gripping his hand.

She started playing with her necklace as she saw Max walk away, only to turn back and ask;

"Hey, you guys coming or not? Oh, I heard we should hit up Loch Nora. That's where the rich people live, right?" She says, chuckling.

Jess groaned, bumping her forehead onto Mike's shoulder.

Lucas and Dustin turned to each other, grinning.

"Yeah!"

Jess whimpered as Dustin left, jealously returning.

Mike sighed as he turned to see the heartbroken look on her face watching Dustin go after Max.

"Come on, let's go," Mike says, squeezing her hand as they followed from behind.

X

Hopper was marking the trees that were dead, returning to the field as he looked over the dead pumpkin patch.

He reached for his gun.

A gunshot is heard, causing him to gasp as he turned, only to sigh when it was just the little boy with his toy gun.

"You're dead."

"Yeah, you got me, kid."

The kid chuckled as he shot the toy gun in the air.

"Happy Halloween."

Hopper froze, checking his watch.

"Oh, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit." He says as he runs to his truck, realizing he had broken his promise to El about getting off early.

And if there was one thing he learned from Jess on one of her rants on the telekinetic girl is that she VALUES her promises that are made by other people.

Which meant he was going to deal with a pissed off teenager when he got back to the cabin.

He started to drive off, the kid with the toy gun watching him.

Suddenly, the truck drove back to the kid, Hopper rolling down the window.

"Hey, kid. Give me some of that candy, would you?"

The boy shook his head.

"No way."

Hopper sighed, grabbing a five dollar bill and showing it to him.

"All right. How about now?"

X

"Who are you? I'm Maria. Will you play with me? Would you like one of my flowers?"

El was bundled up on the couch, hugging a teddy bear tightly.

Hopper had bought it from a yard sale and even though he didn't say who's yard sale it was, El didn't have to ask.

The white tag on the plush toy had the name *JESS H.* on it.

She heard beeping, causing her to push the teddy bear aside, getting up.

She ran up to the radio, sighing.

She looked up at the Morse Code chart.

"L...A...T...E..."

She felt a huge weight on her heart as she dropped her arm.

"Late."

Hopper had broken his promise.

Jessie was right...it does hurt physically and mentally when your parents/guardians break their promises.

El sighed, looking down as the radio continued to beep, but she didn't pay attention.

She was disappointed and upset with Hopper.

He promised her.

And friends don't break promises...

A month after leaving the Upside Down...

El was walking through the woods, carrying a dead bunny.

She looked to a tree, stopping when she saw something carved in.

She wiped away the snow and lightly gasped.

There were names carved into the tree.

JESS HERNANDEZ

MIKE WHEELER

LUCAS SINCLAIR

DUSTIN HENDERSON

WILL BYERS

GABBY HERNANDEZ

THE PARTY

She ran her thumb over Jessie and Mike's names, her lip trembling.

She walked back and glared at the tree, indenting her own name on the tree.

EL

JESS HERNANDEZ

MIKE WHEELER

LUCAS SINCLAIR

DUSTIN HENDERSON

WILL BYERS

GABBY HERNANDEZ

THE PARTY

She wiped her nose, smiling sadly at the tree before continuing to walk ahead.

She stopped when she saw a box outside, furrowing her eyebrows together.

She walked up to it, lifting up the hatch.

She gasped when she saw the Eggo's on top of a small yellow box.

Food.

She looked behind her, checking if someone was watching her.

Someone HAD to know she was out here.

She looked back at the food and grabbed it, running off.

Back to present...

El sighed, narrowing her eyes, turning off the radio.

She didn't want to hear his apology through the radio.

It wouldn't matter, he broke his promise.

8. Chapter 8

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess and Mike take Will back to Mike's place after he gets an episode and Jess reveals her secret that she has powers to him.

El attempts to contact Mike.

"Another full-size. Like, seriously, rich people are such suckers." Dustin was saying to Max, who, couldn't shake the feeling she was being glared at from the back of her head.

Jess gripped onto Mike's hand who squeezed her's tight, also glaring at Max.

She was not only ruining his night but, also Jess' with distracting Dustin from spending time with Jess.

The only reason why she agreed to wear the *Ghostbusters* costume dynamic with the boys was because Dustin suggested her to go as the Marshmallow Monster.

Mike turned to Will.

"Did you agree to this?"

"What?" Will asked, causing Jess to look at Mike.

"To her joining our party."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows, not expecting Mike to suggest such a thing.

"It's just for Halloween." Will reassured him.

"Well, it better be," Jess says.

"You should have checked with us," Mike says, Jess nodding.

"Well, they were excited. I guess I thought you two would be okay with it." Will says.

"She's ruining the best night of the year," Mike says, dragging Jess with him.

"Michael! What was that about?!" She hissed.

"What? It's true!"

"I know it is! But what I don't understand is why YOU don't like Max! I think my reason is pretty obvious, but for the life of me, I can't figure out why you don't like her." Jess says, looking at him.

"She's practically replacing El if she joins the party! That's my problem!" Mike exclaims, causing Jess to pale.

"W-What?!"

"Don't you see it?! Dustin and Lucas are all acting like she's awesome and cool just because she skateboards, that she's not your typical girl. Like you and El." Mike exclaims, causing Jess to think it over.

El wasn't your typical type of girl because she was a badass, sweet, telekinetic girl who saved their asses multiple times.

Max...admittedly was a cool, badass girl who can play video games and earn high scores and skateboards.

While there were major differences, there was ONE similarity that not only Max and El share, but all THREE did.

They're NOT your typical middle school girls.

"Holy fucking shit," Jess mumbled, Mike nodding.

Jess sighs.

"Well-"

"MIKE! JESS!"

They froze.

"MIKE! JESS!"

"Will!" They both exclaim.

"MIKE! JESS!"

They both ran towards the sound of his yelling, Jess cursing for not watching over him.

They notice a flash of the *Ghostbusters* symbol, following it.

They walked down the stairs, Mike grabbing onto Will's arm.

"Will!"

"Will, what's wrong?" Mike asked, Will breathing heavily.

"Are you okay?" Jess asked.

"We couldn't find you. Are you hurt?" Mike asked.

"Holy shit!"

Jess turned to see Dustin, Lucas, and Max walk down.

"Is he okay?" Lucas asked.

"I don't know." Mike says, turning to Will again.

"We're gonna get you home, okay? We're gonna get you home. Hold on." Mike says, Jess, nodding as they helped Will up.

Dustin walked over to Jess, attempting to help her.

"All right, take it easy."

Jess pushed him off.

"We got him, Dustin."

Dustin looked at her blue eyes, swallowing.

"Jess?"

He reached out to her, placing his hand on her cheek.

She sighed.

"Just keep trick-or-treating with Lucas and Max, alright? We're bored anyways."

She takes his hand and kisses it, smiling sadly at him before walking with Mike and Will.

Dustin sighs, watching his crush walk away from him.

X

"It's like...like I'm stuck." Will said, sitting in between Jess and Mike.

"Like, like the Upside Down?" Mike asked, causing Jess to tense at the name.

Will sighed.

"No."

"You know on a View-Master, when it gets, like..."

"Caught between two slides?" Jess asked.

"Yeah. Like that. Like one side's our world, and the other...the other slide is the Upside Down."

Jess placed a hand on Will's shoulder.

"And...And there was this noise coming from everywhere...And then I saw something."

Jess froze, her breath becoming shaky.

"The Demogorgon?" Mike asked.

"No. It was like this huge shadow in the sky. Only, it was alive...And it was coming for me."

"Is this all real?" Mike asked.

"Or is it like the doctors say, all in your head?" Jess asks, bitterly adding the last part.

"I don't know. Just...Just please don't tell the others, okay? They won't understand."

Mike looked at Jess and he looked down.

"Eleven would."

Jess froze, a small whimper escaping her mouth.

"She would?"

"Yeah."

The boys turned to Jess, who was shaking, tears running down.

"She always did."

Mike sighed.

"Sometimes I feel like I still see her. Like she's still around, but she never is." Mike confessed, causing Jess to wipe her eyes, nodding.

"And I feel the same way. Sometimes I feel like...she's in my room, just watching as I talk to her. But, whenever I reach out, the feeling just...vanishes." Jess admitted.

Mike sniffed, his eyes watering for a second before sighing.

"I don't know. Sometimes I feel like I'm going crazy." Mike chuckled.

"Same." Jess agreed, sighing.

"Me, too," Will says, causing the two to look at him.

"Hey, well, if the three of us are going crazy, then, we'll go crazy together, right?" Mike says, causing Jess to laugh.

"Crazy together." Will agreed, grinning.

"Yup, crazy together." Jess grins.

They smiled at each other, Jess pulling the two into a group hug.

"Well, if we're going crazy together, I have a secret to reveal to you Will. Only Mike and El knew about it." Jess says, looking to Mike.

Mike smiled, nodding.

Will watched as a Hershey's bar floated towards him, landing on his palms.

He chuckled.

"How long did you know?"

"Literally a couple hours before you were rescued. I helped El flip a van over our heads during the bike vs. van chase and blood ran down my nose. It's a side-effect that El had if she pushed herself using her powers."

"Well, I won't tell anyone. I promise your secret's safe with me."

Jess smiled, hugging him again.

"Thanks, hermano."

X

Hopper ran up the steps, walking towards the door and knocking the secret knock.

There was no sound of the door being unlocked.

Hopper tried knocking again, with no luck.

He sighed.

"Hey, kid. Open up, all right? Look, I know I'm late. I got candy here, all right? I got all the good stuff."

He sighed, remembering another thing Jess told him that El was stubborn as hell and he didn't need her telling him that since he was taking care of the girl.

"Please, will you open the door? I'm gonna freeze to death out here."

The sound of the locks coming undone came and he opened it, looking around.

He stopped as he saw that the TV was gone, it was moved to El's room.

He sighed, knowing what she was going to do.

He walked towards the door of her room.

"Hey, kid. Open up, would you?"

He sighed, getting closer to the door.

"I got, uh...stuck somewhere, and I lost track of time. And I'm sorry. El, would you please open the door? El?"

He sighs, walking back to the couch.

"All, right. I'm just gonna be out here by myself, eating all this candy. I'm gonna get fat. It's very unhealthy to leave me out here. Could have a heart attack or something. But, you know, you do what you want."

X

In El's room, she was switching the channels until she came upon a static one, sighing as she tied the blindfold over her eyes.

She closed her eyes, thinking of him.

Thinking of Mike.

She opened her eyes, sighing.

"It's day 353."

She turned to see Mike sitting alone on the fort, in his *Ghostbusters* costume.

"I had a bad day today. I don't know. I..."

She started to walk towards him, gulping.

"I guess I wish you were here."

"I mean, we all do. If you're out there, just please give me a sign."

El kneeled down near Mike, looking at him.

Mike looked up, his lips parting slightly as they made eye contact.

El knew he couldn't see her, but god damn it, it didn't stop the butterflies to explode in her chest.

"Mike."

"Eleven?"

She reached out to him, still keeping eye contact with the boy.

It felt like he was watching her in awe, the way his eyes stared at hers, even if he couldn't see her.

Her fingers brushed lightly against his cheek.

He sighs, pulling down the antenna, walking away.

El watched him, her lips trembling.

She snapped back to reality but didn't take off the blindfold.

She sobbed, wiping the blood from her nose.

She missed him so much.

And it hurt that, no matter how much she wanted to...

She couldn't respond to him...

9. Chapter 9

Summary for the Chapter:

El contacts Jess and gets a painful flashback.

El sighed, focusing again.

Focusing on Jessie.

She opened her eyes, surrounded by darkness.

"Hey Once...it's me."

El turned to see Jessie laying on her bed, still in her costume.

"Day 353, huh? Can't believe it's almost been a year."

El came and sat on her bed, looking at her.

Jessie's looked slightly to where El sat.

"Halloween was today. I know that if you were with us still, we could have gone as ghosts together to fit with the whole *Ghostbusters* dynamic for this year. Last year, it was *Star Wars*."

Jessie giggled and El smiled, feeling a bit better.

"I was Princess Leia, Dustin was Han Solo, Mike was Luke Skywalker, Lucas was Chewie, and Will..."

Jessie laughs.

"Will was R2-D2. It was fucking hilarious."

El grinned as Jessie started to giggle, giggling as well.

Jess sighs.

"Well, everything was going well the first couple hours of trick-or-treating with the exception of a few people getting our costumes wrong when...this girl came along and ruined everything."

Jessie groaned as El frowned.

"She dragged Dustin and Lucas away from us and I swear I wanted to break her arm for making it so easy to distract them from hanging out with us. Mike wasn't pleased either and I swear to god if looks could kill, she would have been very dead."

Jessie sighed.

"Not to mention, Will had an episode afterward so...Halloween was pretty fucked up this year."

El looked down, frowning.

"But what really scared me today was...the fact I was almost hit by a car today."

El's head shot up, her eyes widening in horror.

"Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and I were just pedaling back home, talking how no one wore their costumes to school and we didn't know about it when, this car starting to drive towards us, trying to run us over."

Jessie took a deep breath.

"I was pedaling so fast that I probably moved my foot in the wrong direction because, I fell off my bike, rolling towards the car. And at the last second, the car swerved the other way. It was so scary."

Jessie frowned, sighing.

"You probably don't know but...in 12 days it will mark officially 1 year since..."

El frowned, grabbing her hand.

Jessie froze, tears streaming down.

She moved her fingers, making it seem like their fingers were intertwined.

"Bye, El. I hope you had a nice Halloween."

Jessie pushed down the antenna, leaving.

El snapped back to reality, taking off her blindfold, sobbing softly.

She missed her sister.

She wiped her nose and crawled into her bed, closing her eyes, falling asleep.

X

"PAPA!!"

Young Eleven was screaming, sobbing as the two men carried her to that room she hated.

"*ji*ONCE!!"

She turned, seeing a freckled girl, the age of 5 trying to get to her, the men blocking her.

"*ji*ONCE!!"

"JESSIE!!"

Eleven screamed, now realizing that she was trying to get to her.

To save her from getting punished.

The two men blocking 'Jessie' suddenly slammed towards the wall, Jessie running to Eleven, screaming out for her over and over again.

"*ji*ONCE!! *ji*ONCE!!"

"JESSIE!!"

Jessie moved across the hall, more men, now with guns pointing at her, blocking her path.

"JESSIE!!"

Jessie glared at them, raising her chin, her eyes narrowing, her upper row of teeth showing as her bottom lip hid the lower row that's gritted with the

upper row.

The guns flew out of the men's hands and faced their foreheads as the gunshots sounded.

"iiONCE!!"

"JESSIE!! JESSIE!! HELP!!"

She ran, sliding to the end of the hall, jumping over the piles of bodies that dropped at the attempt to hold her back.

To prevent her from protecting her best friend.

Her sister.

She looked back and forth, listening for the screams of Eleven.

She ran to the right, in time to see the men throw Eleven in the room, slamming close the door.

Oh, HELL NO.

She screamed, slamming one into the wall, and breaking the other's neck.

She sighed, the blood that ran down her nose dripping down her chin to the floor as she ran towards the door, the adrenaline she felt running down slowly.

She swung the door open and Eleven ran into her arms, sobbing on her shoulder.

She hugged back, getting out the room, closing the door with her mind, tears running down her cheeks.

"You're safe. You're safe. I won't let anything hurt you."

She looked up to see Dr. Brenner standing there, a satisfied smirk on his lips.

And standing next to him, were her parents, smiling proudly at their daughter, the mother holding their youngest, 3 years old, sleeping in her arms.

"Muy bien Jessica." Her father congratulated.

Jessie smiled tiredly, Eleven noticing how she was leaning on her now.

"Help. I'll help." She whispered as Jessie passed out in her arms.

Her father picked up his daughter, smiling kindly at Eleven, as she walked with him, holding onto Jessie's dangling hand.

She'll help.

X

El jolted awake, her eyes looking at her surroundings.

It was still dark, Hopper's snoring heard from the other room.

She sighed, hugging the teddy bear tightly, tears running down.

Jessie saved her that day.

She protected her from that godforsaken room.

She got up, pulling a drawer to reveal two Polaroid photos and a Walkman with one of Jessie's mixtapes she 'forgot' to give back to Hopper.

There was also one of Jessie's headphones in the drawer.

She took the Polaroid photos and the Walkman with the headphones, putting them on and connecting them to the Walkman.

She sat on her bed as *Lucky Star* by Madonna started playing, looking at the Polaroid photo of her with Mike and Jessie, both hugging her as Jessie kissed her cheek.

Tears ran down her cheeks as she rubbed the photo.

"You must be my Lucky Star, 'cause you make the darkness seem so far. And when I'm lost, you'll be my guide. I just turn around, and you're by my side." she softly sang, her voice cracking softly.

They were her lucky stars...

10. Chapter 10

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess sneaks to Mike's place for comfort after the flashback-nightmare.

The two recall happier times when El was with them.

Jess shot up awake, gasping.

Another damn dream about her and...

She sobbed, covering her face.

How dare they?!

HOW DARE THEY?!

She threw her blanket aside, walking towards the mirror in her room, glaring at her blue eyes.

"HOW COULD YOU?!" She cried, tears streaming down.

She didn't see her reflection.

She saw her father, with those stupid blue eyes she inherited from him.

"YOU LET US FORGET EACH OTHER!! YOU LET ME LEAVE HER!! YOU BASTARD!!" She screams.

She took a loud, shaky breath before sinking to her knees.

She hated them.

And she had every right to hate them.

They abused her.

They manipulated her.

They were the reason for her amnesia when she was 7 years old.

They emotionally and physically damaged her.

They created the stutter she had to overcome when she spoke in English when she was depressed.

They were the cause of 90% of the scars that were painted all over her body.

And they made her hate herself.

She dragged her nails against her skin, marking them red.

She sobbed, looking towards her photo album.

She took it, flipping through the pages, landing on the last one, her thumb running through the two Polaroid photos.

X

"Jessie?"

Jess looked up to see El looking at her photo album.

"What's this?"

"Oh! My photo album! I haven't used it since last month on Halloween."

She walked towards the telekinetic girl.

"Most of these pictures are taken from my parents, but some I took myself."

El smiled at a photo of 7-year-old Mike with a 7-year-old Jess, hugging each other, Mike kissing her cheek.

"Mike was my first friend in Hawkins. I saw him as my brother. I *STILL* do." Jess chuckled, smiling at the photo.

El flipped the page, then burst out laughing.

Jess giggled as well.

"Oh yeah, we pranked Dustin in one of our sleepovers. He was the first to fall asleep."

The photo consisted of a 10-year-old Dustin sleeping with drawings all over his face, a 10-year-old Lucas giggling with a black permanent marker in his hand. A 10-year-old Mike was laughing in the background with a 10-year-old Will.

"What are you two looking at?"

The girls looked up to see Mike walking down with a tray.

"My photo album. Showing El some memories." Jess answered.

Mike looked over at the pictures, laughing at one.

"That one always cracks me up."

An 11-year-old Jess was licking an 11-year-old Dustin's cheek, his face showing so much shock.

El burst into giggles as Jess laughed.

"I forgot about that one! Oh my god!"

Jess looked up at Mike.

"You know what? We should take a picture of the three of us! Our first photo memory of El!"

Mike groaned.

"Seriously, Jessica?!"

"Yes, Michael! Where is your mom's Polaroid camera?"

X

"Last one!"

El had the camera floating up, Mike and Jess hugging her tightly, Jess kissing her cheek as the camera went off.

"Oh, thank god! That took forever!"

"Only 3 minutes Mike!" Jess corrected.

"Longest 3 minutes of my life!"

X

Jess' lips trembled, looking out her window.

She frowned, narrowing her eyes.

She grabbed her backpack, putting in a spare change of clothes, her Supercomm, her rifle and pistol (just in case), her books, and her photo album.

She placed Dustin's hat on her head after she put on her converse, opening her window, jumping out and landing on the ground.

She started to run towards the Wheeler's, running around the house and climbing up the roof.

She stopped when she went to Mike's room, tapping on the window.

Mike, who had been struggling to sleep looked towards the side, his eyes widening when he saw the freckled Colombian at his window.

"Jess?"

He pulled up the window, allowing her to get in his room.

She hugged him tightly, tears running down her cheeks.

"What happened Jess?"

"A dream...about her and I in that fucking lab."

Mike froze, releasing her from his grip.

"W-What was it about this time?"

Jess sniffed, wiping her tears.

"They were dragging her to that fucking room, where she has to stay there for who knows how long, and I was running towards her, trying to protect her. I literally had to KILL men who blocked me because they had guns to get to her. I eventually did get to her, but you know what happened in the end?"

Jess gritted her teeth.

"It was all an EXPERIMENT, to see how far I can go before I collapsed from overusing my powers."

Mike let in a short breath, his eyes widening as Jess' face crumbled.

"I can't imagine how alone she must have felt for the past 7 years after we got separated."

Mike hugged her tightly as she sobbed, hugging him tightly.

He looked up at the framed picture of The Party before they found Will.

X

Jess was walking back to the Gym, El noticing her and running up to her, throwing her arms around the girl, still shivering slightly.

Jess hugged her back, squeezing her softly.

"You okay?"

El nodded.

"Promise."

She smiled, holding onto El's hand as they walked back to the boys.

"We're getting Will back. I can't believe it." Jess says, voicing her thoughts.

"Me neither. And we stayed this long without dying either, it's crazy." Mike says, causing a scoff to escape Jess' lips.

"We've had close calls though." Jess reminded him.

Mike rolled his eyes, scoffing.

"True but, still."

Jess sighs, shaking her head.

El was going through Jess' backpack, her eyebrows furrowing when she picked up the Polaroid camera from Mike's house.

"You brought it? Seriously?" Mike asked.

"Well, I mean...running away from the government, we're bound to have memories of the crazy shit we went through."

"We have El! That's as amazing as it's going to get!"

El blushed, smiling down at the camera.

"And I agree! However, I still think pictures are great! In fact..."

She takes the camera, grinning at the boys.

"We're taking a couple right now! No complaining!"

The boys groaned.

Mike was about to protest when El sat next to him, laying her head on his shoulder, causing his cheeks to flame up.

"So it's happening! Huddle up!"

X

Mike sighed, wiping Jess' tears away before dragging her in his bed with him.

She hugged him tightly, breathing in shakily.

"Buenas Noches hermano..." she mumbled.

"Night little sis." He replied, his eyelids also closing as he fell asleep with her.

And for once, the plaguing nightmares played mercy on them and let them sleep in peace.

11. Chapter 11

Summary for the Chapter:

El recalls bad memories of Jess and Mike and decides to go see them.

...It doesn't go as planned.

[DISCLAIMER: MENTIONS OF SELF-HARM, SUICIDE ATTEMPT, AND CHILD ABUSE!! READ AT YOUR OWN RISK!!]

A month after El left the Upside Down...

El was watching as Hopper placed food into the box, hiding behind The Party Tree, sighing.

She decided to go after him.

He might help her.

X

Hopper was walking towards his car when he heard footsteps.

He turned to see El, watching him.

For a short second, he thought he saw Jess because of how similar their faces looked weak and pale.

He removed his hat, in a form of greeting.

El sighed, looking at him.

If Jessie could trust him when she answered him a month ago for help, then so can she.

Back to present...

"Rise and shine."

El opened her eyes, her eyes darting to Hopper before turning over, hugging the teddy bear close.

"So that's it, huh? You're still not talking?"

El wasn't mad anymore, she was just disappointed.

Hopper made her a promise and he broke it.

You're not supposed to make promises you can't keep.

"All right. I guess I'm gonna have to, uh...enjoy this triple-decker Eggo extravaganza on my own."

El's eyes widened, darting to where Hopper was.

She knew exactly what he was trying to do, and she admitted that she was falling for it but...

It's rare when Hopper makes a triple-decker Eggo extravaganza.

ESPECIALLY in the morning.

She sighed, throwing her covers aside.

Might as well enjoy them.

X

She sat in her chair as Hopper cut the Eggos in half.

El took her fork and took a half of an Eggo, biting into it.

"Mmmm!" Hopper exclaims, exaggerating a bit.

El looked at him.

"Good, right? Know the great thing about it? It's only 8,000 calories."

El just stared blankly at him, not knowing what the hell he just said or meant.

He sniffed, looking at the cord that entered her room.

"You visited them again last night?"

Her eyes darted from the cord to Hopper, her eyes darting back to the Eggos.

"They say that they need me," El says, inwardly agreeing with her sentence.

She could have stopped a lot of things that she witnessed them go through in the void.

"Want me to go check on them?"

El shook her head.

They still had each other.

They were able to save each other from most things throughout the year.

"I know that you miss them, all right? Jess misses you by the sound of her ranting about you. But, it's too dangerous."

El looked at him, not believing him.

Even if it was still, is it worth it hiding while her sister and the boy she is in love with is emotionally in pain?

"You're the last thing they need right now."

That was a big, fat lie.

"You're gonna see them. Soon. And not just in that head of yours. You're gonna see them in real life. I feel like I'm making progress with these people."

El leaned in.

"Friends don't lie."

"What?"

"You say 'soon' on day 21. You say 'soon' on day 205. You now say

'soon' on day 326?" El questioned.

"What is this? You're counting down the days now like you're some kind of prisoner?" Hopper asked.

In a way, she was.

"When is 'soon'?"

"Soon' is when...it's not dangerous anymore."

"When?" El asked, growing impatient.

Hopper shrugged.

"I don't know."

"On day 500?"

"I don't know."

"On day 600?"

"I don't know."

"Day 700? On day 800?"

"No!"

"I need to see them!! Tell me!" El yelled, slamming her fists on the table.

"I said I-"

Out of anger and frustration, El used her telekinesis to slam the plate of Eggos into Hopper.

"Oh! Shit! Shit!"

El stood up, glaring at him.

"Friends.Don't.Lie!!"

She stormed to her room, flicking her arm to slam the door telekinetically.

She grabbed her hair, groaning loudly.

"You're the last thing they need right now."

Bull-fucking-shit.

How can he say that when she witnessed Jessie cut her skin through the void, screaming at her to stop as Jessie sobbed at every flick of the small blade digging into her skin?

How she sunk to her knees in relief when Mike came in, stopping Jessie, screaming and sobbing as he grabbed onto her face as she sobbed and apologized over and over.

She flinched at the memory, not wanting to think about it.

She had told Hopper and he got Jess into the hospital where they stopped the bleeding and wrapped her arms up.

Jessie was on her way to healing when...

Flashback...

El didn't know why she wanted to check up on Jessie early.

Maybe she was still scared of what happened in the past month after Jessie cut herself and Mike stopping her from harming herself any further might happen again.

So, she turned to the TV, switching the channels until she came across a static one, tying the blindfold over her eyes.

She focused on Jessie, focusing on the good memories of her.

She opened her eyes, flinching when she heard screaming.

She turned and gasped, her eyes widening in horror.

Jessie was pressed against the wall, her hair sticking up in an awkward way, screaming in pain as tears streamed down her cheeks, bruises

appearing left and right on her arms and face.

"Useless bitch."

El suddenly saw two adults slapping and punching Jessie.

El widened her eyes as she recognized the blue eyes on the man, the brown hair color of the woman, then noticing the rings on their hands.

They were Jessie's parents.

"STOP IT!! DON'T HURT HER!!" *El screamed, running towards them.*

Jessie kicked the man's groin, spitting in his face, El freezing momentarily in horror when she saw that what she spit...

...Was blood.

"YOU BITCH!!"

The mother grabbed Jessie's hair, throwing her harshly against the wall...

...El widening her eyes in horror when she heard a crack , an image of a shattered window where Jessie's head hit, blood showing as Jessie sled down.

El screamed, covering her mouth.

"JESSICA!! JESSICA!!"

She wanted Jessie to fight back, to use her powers to snap those fuckers' necks, freeing her from the abuse.

But, Jessie wouldn't.

She simply got up, wiping the blood from her broken nose.

"That all you fuckers got?"

El whimpered, wondering WHY would she taunt them into hurting her more?

Was this some twisted way of showing them that she was no longer afraid

of them?

The father growled at her, storming towards her as Jessie threw stuff at him, only to be grabbed by the neck, locked in a headlock.

El paled when she noticed that he was carrying a blade...

..And shrieked when he stabbed it deep in Jessie's hip, causing her to scream.

"You're dead, you little mistake."

"F-F-Fuck y-y-you A-A-Alejandro."

"JESSIE!!!" El screamed.

"LET HER GO!!!"

El froze, recognizing the new voice.

She turned to see Mike with a panicked, scared, and furious expression.

"Mike..."

"GET YOUR PAWS OFF HER YOU SON OF A BITCH!!"

El saw Dustin standing next to him, a beyond furious expression on his face.

She blinked, now seeing Lucas and Will, a mixture of anger and fear written in their expressions.

"B-Boys..."

Jessie whimpered as the blade now slashed her jawline.

"Lucas! Go get Hopper, NOW!"

Lucas immediately had turned when he froze, hearing the sound of a gun being loaded.

El froze when she saw the mother point the pistol at Mike.

"No one goes anywhere."

The father dropped Jessie, causing her to cry out in pain.

"No...no! STOP IT!! STOP IT!!" El screamed, tears running down at full stream.

It infuriated her to no end that she couldn't do ANYTHING but just WATCH.

Lucas turned to Mike.

"Mike...what do we do?"

Mike's nostrils flared.

"GO LUCAS!!"

Lucas gulped before jumping out the window.

Jessie widened her eyes, turning to see her mother put her finger on the trigger.

"NO!"

Jessie forced herself up, running to Mike, pushing him out of the way when-

BANG!

El covered her mouth, screaming as Mike's eyes widened in horror as Jessie staggered backward, a hole in her shirt where the bullet hit.

"JESSICA!!"

End of Flashback...

El covered her mouth, tears streaming down her cheeks as she remembered how the boys caught Jessie as she fell backward, ignoring the fact that her parents fled the scene.

Mike, Dustin, and Will were sobbing as Dustin cradled her close, trying desperately to stop the bleeding...but it only added more to the

physical pain she felt at that moment.

She forced herself to try to stay awake for the boys sake so they didn't think they had lost her.

They already lost Gabriella...

They couldn't lose her too...

El didn't know what happened next because she snapped out of the void, sobbing and crawling into a ball.

She didn't leave her room for three days afterward, keeping an eye on Jessie and Mike in the void while Jessie was in the hospital.

She was so relieved when she saw Jessie wake up, the first out of everyone to know.

She immediately told Hopper through Morse Code, a feeling of relief coursing through her veins.

The feeling wouldn't last for more than two months...

Flashback...

El was watching as Jessie put on her converse shoes, singing to Michael Jackson.

"Cause this is thriller, thriller night. And no one's gonna save you, from the beast about to strike." She sang, tying the shoelaces.

El smiled.

"You know it's thriller, thriller night. You're fighting for your life, inside a killer. Thriller tonight, yeah." El sang the next part, giggling.

She memorized the song as it was one of the main songs that were always in Jessie's mixtapes.

Jessie put on Dustin's hat, humming the beat to the song, El following her through the void, only to see Mike leave his house.

She furrowed her eyebrows, a bit worried.

Jessie vanished as El followed Mike, getting a bad feeling.

X

Mike had walked up to the cliff to the Quarry, the wind blowing his hair as he stared down at the water.

El swallowed, not liking the possibility of what might happen.

"Mike...Mike please." She pleaded.

She hated that he couldn't hear her.

Mike took a shaky breath, and screamed.

"MIKE!!"

El froze, her eyes widening as Mike sobbed, screaming his name over and over again.

"Mike!" El yelled, running up to him, wanting him FAR away from the cliff.

Mike whimpered.

"I'm sorry Jess...El."

He stepped over the edge, El screaming in horror.

"MIKE!!"

She ran to the edge of the cliff, letting out a breath of relief...

...Mike was floating.

She turned to see Jess sobbing, blood running down her nose as she lifted Mike up.

She dragged him in the air FAR AWAY from the cliff, setting him down gently.

She wiped her nose, collapsing on her knees.

She had grown stronger, but she still felt weak when she pushed herself.

Mike sat up, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Jess...I-"

"WHAT THE FUCKING HELL MICHAEL WHEELER?!"

Mike flinched at how angry and sad Jess sounded when she yelled.

She sobbed, throwing her arms around him.

"DID YOU EVER THINK OF HOW I WOULD FEEL IF YOU ACTUALLY KILLED YOURSELF?! I ALREADY LOST BOTH OF MY SISTERS, I CAN'T LOSE MY BROTHER!!"

El sobbed, watching as Mike's eyes widened, and suddenly, breaking down, hugging Jess tightly.

"I'm sorry! I just wanted this pain to end!"

Jess looked at Mike, wiping her eyes.

"You don't end it by killing yourself, Mike! Take it from someone who caused Self-Harm once and went through Child Abuse for about 4 years before you guys found out, it just hurts the people you care about!"

End of Flashback...

El whimpered, crawling into a ball in her bed.

'The last thing they need' her ass.

X

"The case of Phineas Gage is one of the great medical curiosities of all time. Phineas was a railroad worker in 1848 who had a nightmarish accident. A large iron rod was driven completely through his head. Phineas miraculously survived. He seemed fine. And physically, yes, he was. But his injury resulted a complete change to his personality. So much so that his friends that knew him started referring him as

'No longer Gage'. At the time, this was known as the American Crowbar Case. Although it wasn't a—" Mr. Clarke was teaching before the door slammed open, startling Jess, who was deep in thought about her dream in the lab.

It was Dustin who ran in, panting heavily.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Clarke. Really, I'm so sorry. Please continue."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows, looking at him.

"Don't mind me. Really, continue, please. Thanks."

"Although it wasn't a crowbar, it was a rod, as I said."

Dustin turned to the boys and Jess, all leaning in as Dustin spoke.

"We have to meet. All of us. At lunch, AV Club."

"Why?" Mike whispered.

"I have something that you won't believe."

Jess smiled.

"Can't wait to see what it is Dustin," she whispered.

Dustin turned to her, blushing bright red as she smiled at him.

"You're going to love it, Jess, I know it," he whispered to her, the boys rolling their eyes and sitting back in their chairs.

Jess smiled and poked his nose, giggling softly before turning back her attention to Mr. Clarke.

"You guys are such a couple, I swear," Lucas whispered to her.

Jess rolled her eyes.

"Oh, be quiet Sinclair."

X

El was looking at the TV screen, staring at her reflection.

She had woken up from her nap, which thankfully blessed her a dreamless slumber.

She sat up, sighing.

She decided to check on Mike and Jess.

She got her blindfold, tying it over her eyes.

She sighed, closing her eyes.

She couldn't concentrate.

Out of frustration, she threw the blindfold off.

It wasn't enough, it NEVER was enough.

She wanted to be able to touch them for real, give them a real hug and hold their hands for real.

She grabbed onto her jacket, the one with the name *MIKE W.* on the white tag.

She left her room, looking at the door.

A month after El left the Upside Down...

Hopper opened the door, kicking the snow in his shoes off his feet.

El followed his example, looking around the cabin.

"My grandad used to live here. Long time ago. I mainly just use it for storage now. Lot of history here."

El looked around.

Jessie would like this place.

It seemed something like from a fairytale she once told her about in a flashback she got last week.

"So, uh...what do you think? It's a work-in-progress. You know, it's, uh...it takes a little imagination, but, uh...once we fix it up, it's gonna be nice. Real nice. This is your new home."

El looked to Hopper, her lips twitching up.

"Home."

X

"Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. All right, this...this is music." Hopper says, showing her disc cover, You Don't Mess Around With Jim showing on it.

He pulls the disc from the cover, playing it on the disc player.

El widened her eyes when the music started playing, suddenly hearing Jessie's laughter when she showed her the Walkman she always had in her backpack, letting her listen to the song.

This song was the one she heard through it.

She watched as Hopper started snapping his fingers.

She couldn't help it...she smiled.

This song reminded her of good memories.

"Uptown got its hustlers, The bowery got its bums."

She furrowed her eyebrows when Hopper started dancing, smiling a bit wider.

In the back her mind, she saw Jessie moving her shoulders to the beat, throwing her hair over her face while laughing.

"All right. Let's get to work."

X

El pulled the sheet off the mattress, coughing as some dust got inhaled through her nose.

She sat on it, bouncing up and down, grinning.

A real bed.

She can finally sleep in a real bed.

X

She was trying to sweep the floor when Hopper took the broom from her, showing her how to sweep properly.

She took the broom back, sweeping correctly.

X

Hopper taught her Morse code so that he could contact her without anyone overhearing their conversation.

X

She was placing the puzzle pieces together, most of it almost finished.

X

They were outside again, this time, El was in new, warmer clothes.

She watched as Hopper set up something.

"Give me those. Now, this is called a trip wire. It's like an alarm. You, uh, set it up like this. And then, anybody gets close, it's gonna make a loud noise like, uh, gunfire. Bang!"

El flinched when he made the sound effect, the sudden noise startling her.

He chuckled, placing a hand on her shoulder before sighing.

"Those bad men aren't gonna find ya. All right? Not way the hell out here. We'll take some precautions. There's going to be a couple ground rules."

X

"Rule number one: Always keep the curtains drawn."

El opens the curtain, breaking the first rule.

"Rule number two: Only open the door if you hear my secret knock."

El unlocks the door, opening it.

"And rule number three: Don't ever go out alone, especially not in the daylight."

El walked out the house, sighing.

"That's it. Three rules. I call 'em the, uh...Don't Be Stupid Rules."

El walked out into the clearing, walking towards the tripwire.

"Cause we're not stupid. Right?"

"Not stupid." She says, walking over the trip wire, heading to school, to see Mike and Jessie.

X

The boys and the girls were in the AV Room, Dustin opening the trap he used on Halloween to show a creature in it.

"His name is d'Artagnan," Dustin told them as the boys and girls looked at the creature.

Dustin picked it up, looking to Jess.

"Cute, right?"

She grinned and nodded, looking at d'Artagnan.

"d'Artagnan?" Mike asked.

"Dart for short."

"And he was in your trash?" Max asked.

"Foraging for food. You wanna hold him?"

"No, no," Max says.

"Come on Max, don't be a scaredy-cat," Jess smirked, Mike giggling,

seeing what she was doing.

"He doesn't bite!" Dustin says, putting Dart in her hands.

"I don't want to-, Oh, God, he's slimy!" Max exclaims, putting him in Lucas' hands.

"Ugh, he's like a living booger," Lucas says in disgust, placing him in Will's hands.

"Ugh, oh, God!" Will exclaims, putting him in Jess' hands.

She, however, grinned widely at him.

"AWWW! HE'S CUTE!!!"

Dustin grinned the biggest grin as Jess cooed at Dart.

"But they're right Dustin, he does feel weird." she giggled, placing him in Mike's hands.

Mike held him up, looking at him closely.

"What is he?"

"My question exactly."

X

"At first, I thought it was some sort of pollywog."

"Pollywog?" Max asked.

"It's another word for tadpole." Jess and Dustin say, before looking at each other before smiling at their feet, blushing.

"A tadpole is the larval stage of a toad."

"I know what a tadpole is."

Jess glared at her, causing Max to frown.

"Alright, then you know that most tadpoles are aquatic, right? Well,

Dart, he isn't. He doesn't need water."

"Yeah, but aren't there nonaquatic pollywogs?" Lucas asked.

"Terrestrial pollywogs? Yep. Two to be exact. *Indirana semipalmata*. And the *Adenomera andreae*. One's from India, one's from—"

"South America," Jess says, looking at him.

He nods, smiling at her.

"So, how did one end up in my trash?"

"Maybe some scientists brought it here, and it escaped?" Max suggested.

"That's...actually a good theory," Jess says, looking at her.

"Do you guys see that?"

Jess turned to Mike before looking to where Dart was.

Her eyebrows furrowed when she noticed something moving inside him.

"Looks like something is moving inside of it."

Mike looked to Jess, who raised an eyebrow, any affection she showed to the creature disappearing in an instant, suspicion in its place.

He shined the light towards it, Dart screeching, all of them exclaiming, Jess and Mike grabbing onto each other.

Dart moves from his spot, Dustin catching him.

"Whoa. It's okay. It's okay."

Jess and Mike look at each other before letting go of each other, sighing.

"I got you, little guy. I know you don't like that. It's okay."

He looks up to Jess, completely missing the now-terrified look on her face.

"And there's another thing. Reptiles, they're cold-blooded. Ectothermic, right? They love heat, the sun. Dart hates it. It hurts him."

"So, if he's not a pollywog or a reptile..."

"Then I've discovered a new species."

Jess smiled, crossing her arms.

Dart was freaky, she finally caught up with the others on that.

But, she couldn't help but feel happy for Dustin discovering something new in the world.

He looks to her and she flashes him a grin.

What harm could Dart bring anyways?

The bell rings, causing all of them to get their backpacks and leave the AV room.

"We gotta show him to Mr. Clarke," Lucas says.

"No, what if he steals my discovery?" Dustin asks.

"He's not gonna steal your discovery," Mike says.

"Yeah, he's too cool to do that. And even if he does, he's going to have to deal with an angry 13-year-old Latina." Jess grins.

Dustin smiles at her, kissing her cheek, making her flush bright red.

"Thanks, Jess. You know, I'm thinking of calling it *Dustonious pollywogus*. What do you think?" he asks Jess, who's about to laugh and say she likes it when-

"I think you're an idiot," Max says.

Jess glared at her and told Dustin;

"Well, I think you're a genius."

Dustin turns bright red and grins.

"Thanks, Jess!"

He turns to Max and says;

"You know, when I become rich and famous for this one day, don't come crawling back, saying, 'Oh, my god, Dustin, I'm so sorry for being mean to you back in 8th grade. Oh, my god.'"

Jess laughs, throwing an arm around him, kissing his cheek, while he blushed.

Max watched and suddenly noticed how protective Jess was when she *playfully* insulted him.

"Are you two dating?"

The question threw them both off guard, both blushing bright red.

"Nope."

"No."

Max raised an eyebrow as Jess withdrew her arm, her cheeks burning bright red.

She decided not to press.

Dustin looks to Jess and grabs her hand and squeezes it, causing her to smile at him and squeeze back.

X

El was walking through the forest, a bit lost.

She hears voices and despite the voice in her head saying not to, she follows the sound, finding a mother pushing her daughter in the swing set in their backyard.

She watched with a sort of longing in her eyes.

Flashback...

"I would feel so sad if I thought I was a disappointment to her...because she didn't live very long after that, you see." Hopper was reading to El, a bedtime story as Jessie had called it once in a flashback dream she got last week.

"She died of a fever when I was just three months old. I do wish she'd lived long enough for me to remember calling her mother. I think it would be so sweet to say 'mother'."

"Do I have a mother?" El asked.

Hopper looks up to her.

"Yeah, of course you have a mother. You couldn't really be born without one."

El's lips trembled.

"Where is she?"

"She...She's not around anymore."

El let in a shaky gasp.

"Gone?"

"Yeah."

El looked down, tears filling her eyes.

"It's okay to cry when you're sad Once, we all need to break down once in a while. Just be sure to break down either by yourself or, with someone you REALLY trust."

El let in a shaky breath, tears slipping down her cheeks.

"I'm sorry about that, kid."

She nodded, closing her eyes as more tears slipped down.

"And, uh, father died four days from fever, too. That left me an orphan

and folks were at their wits' end, so Mrs. Thomas said to me, what to do with me. You see, nobody wanted me even then. It seems to be my fate."

End of Flashback...

"Sweetie?"

El turned to see the woman with her daughter looking at her.

"School. Where is school?" El asked.

"The school? It's uh...it's about a mile that way. At least."

El turned the way the woman pointed.

Mike and Jessie...

They were about a mile away from where she was.

"Where are your parents?"

El turned and looked at the swing set, making it swing over and over again, catching the attention of the daughter.

"Look, Mommy, look."

When the woman turned, El ran towards the direction of the school.

She was going to see Mike and Jessie.

And that thought brought a smile on her face.

X

The bell rang, ending school.

Jess was walking with Mike, going to get Will.

"Will, you coming? Let's go show Mr. Clarke." Mike asked him.

Will closed his locker, walking up to them.

"What?"

Will looked frightened, his skin turning pale.

"What?"

"It's about d'Artagnan."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows.

"He's from the Upside Down."

Mike gasped, turning to Jess who had an unreadable expression.

"What?"

"After I came home from our Dungeon & Dragons campaign back in December, I threw up this sort of slug in the sink. I didn't tell anyone, not even my mom."

Jess' expression turned horrified.

"A-And you think it's Dart?" Mike asked.

Will nodded.

"Holy fucking shit." Jess gasped.

Mike turned to the two.

"We need to stop Dustin before he shows Mr. Clarke."

The three looked at each other before running to where Mr. Clarke's classroom was.

X

"Stop!" Mike yelled as they opened the door, Jess running behind him.

"I'm really sorry, Mr. Clarke. It was just a stupid prank." Jess lied, holding onto Mike's shoulders as he grabbed the trap.

"What the hell are you doing?" Dustin asked.

"I told him to stop. We need to go." Jess says, Dustin, noticing the pure fear in her eyes.

"Right now," Mike says.

"Jess! Mike!"

"RIGHT NOW!" he yells, Mike running towards the AV room, Jess following behind him.

X

Max was banging on the door from the other side.

"Hello? Hello? Guys, come on. Can I come in yet?"

"NO!" Mike and Jess yell.

"I don't understand," Lucas says.

"What do you not understand?" Mike asked, holding onto Jess who was rubbing her arms, her scars feeling so itchy.

"Will saw something that looked like Dart last year?"

"Kind of, but there was no tail."

"But then he heard it yesterday. The exact same sound." Jess says.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" Dustin asked.

"I wasn't sure."

"So, it's a coincidence," Dustin says.

"Or not. What if when Will was stuck in the Upside Down, he somehow acquired True Sight?" Jess asks, Mike nodding.

"True Sight?" Lucas asked.

"It gives you the power to see into the ethereal plane," Dustin explained.

Lucas sighed.

"Elaborate."

"Maybe these episodes that Will keeps having aren't really flashbacks at all. Maybe they're real. Maybe Will can somehow see into the Upside Down." Mike explained.

"So that would mean..."

"Dart is from the Upside Down," Jess confirmed.

Lucas sighed.

"We have to take him to Hopper."

"I agree," Mike says.

"I'll personally take him to Papa Hopper, make sure nothing happens," Jess suggests.

"No. No way. If we take him to Hopper, Dart's good as dead." Dustin says, looking at Jess.

"I'm sorry Dustin, but-"

"Maybe he should be dead." Mike interrupts her, delivering a blunt version of what she was going to say.

"How can you say that?"

"How could you not? He's from the Upside Down." Mike argued.

"Maybe. But even if he is, it doesn't automatically mean he's bad."

"That's like saying just because someone's from the Death Star doesn't make them bad."

"We have a bond."

"A bond? Just because he likes nougat?" Mike scoffs.

"Mike! Calm down!" Jess exclaims.

"No, because he trusts me!" Dustin yelled.

"He trusts you?" Lucas asked.

"Yes, I promised I would take care of him."

Dart screeches, causing the five kids to back up.

Jess glared at the trap, only for Mike to place his hand on her shoulder, shaking his head.

"Well, what can we do, Mike?!" she whispered.

"Guys, what's going on? Come on." Max yelled, banging on the door.

"Just leave it to me. Besides, I don't think revealing you have powers by killing Dart is the best way to reveal them."

"Who says I was going to kill Dart?" she whispered, causing Mike to shrug.

The trap was shaking, causing them to turn towards it.

Mike grabbed the mic of the Heathkit.

"Don't hurt him," Dustin exclaimed.

"Only if he attacks," Mike says.

"Just open it already," Lucas says.

Jess turned to Mike who was getting ready.

Dustin turned to Jess who nodded at him, grabbing his hand.

He reaches for the button to open the trap and pressed on it.

Jess gasped, covering her mouth as Dart got out.

He had grown bigger.

"Holy shit." Lucas cursed.

"Fucking hell," she whispered.

Dart crawled out, screeching loudly.

Jess turned to Mike and Will who had horrified looks on their faces.

She turned back to see Dart grow legs, causing her to place her hand over her mouth as she violently felt bile rising to her throat as it looked at her.

She swallowed her saliva, not wanting to throw up.

"Oh, shit!"

It roared at Jess, causing Mike to attack, feeling protective over his 'little sis'.

"No!" Dustin yelled, pushing Mike aside, causing Dart to fall off the table.

Jess ran towards him, glaring down at it only for Max to open the door, allowing him to escape.

"What the-"

"Oh, shit!" Mike exclaimed.

"No!" Jess yelled.

Jess followed Mike, ignoring the fact that Dustin fell on top of Max.

"Where'd he go?" Lucas asked.

"What was that?" Max asked.

"Dart!" Mike yelled at her, anger coursing through his veins.

"What?"

"YOU LET HIM FUCKING ESCAPE!!" Jess screamed.

"Why did you attack him?!" Dustin yelled at Mike.

"HE ROARED AT JESSICA!! EXCUSE ME FOR FEELING MORE PROTECTIVE OVER MY LITTLE SISTER THAN YOU ARE OVER YOUR CRUSH!!" Mike yelled at him.

"HEY!!" Jess yelled, pushing them aside, telekinetically and physically.

Jess turned to Mike, allowing him to see the blood running down her nose.

"Come on big brother." She says, grabbing his hand, running towards the hallway.

"Don't hurt him! Don't you hurt him!" Dustin yelled.

X

El walked out the forest, gasping when she saw the familiar building.

"School."

She ran towards the bike rack, gasping when she saw Mike's bike.

Tears welled up in her eyes as she walked up to it, touching the handle, smiling softly.

He was still here.

She turned to look at the building when she noticed the bike next to Mike's.

She gasped, the tears streaming down.

It was Jessie's.

She walked towards it, touching the handle, her grin widening.

She was still here.

Mike and Jessie were still here.

She looked to the school, deciding not to waste any time.

She was going to find them.

X

Mike and Jess had split up, deciding it would cover more ground.

Mike talked into the Supercomm.

"East is clear. No sign of Dart."

He sighed.

"Where'd you go, you little bastard?"

As he walked past a hallway, on the other side, El was walking the opposite direction.

She stopped when she thought she heard Mike's voice.

She walked through the hallway, looking both ways before walking towards the right.

She was walking through the hallways when she froze, seeing a girl come from the left side of the hallway.

It was Jessie.

She hid, peeking out.

Jessie looked a bit pissed off.

"Nothing here, man. Jess?" (Lucas)

Jessie raised her Supercomm and El gasped when she spoke.

"Nada. I'm heading to the gym."

"I'll be there Jess." (Mike)

"I'll help."

Jessie turned back to where she came from, causing El to frown, hoping that she would have gone towards her direction so she could

say hi.

Well, at least she could say hi to both Mike and Jessie now.

She just needed to find the gym.

X

Jess was near the gym when-

"Why do you and Jess hate me so much?"

"We don't hate you. How can we hate you? We don't even know you."

Jess groaned, walking into the gym.

"Yeah, but you two don't want me in your party."

"Correct," Mike says.

"What he said," Jess says, causing Mike to look up, to see her walk up to him, glaring at Max.

"Why not?"

"Because you're annoying!" Jess exclaimed.

"Also, we don't need another party member. I'm out paladin, Will's our cleric, Dustin's our bard, Lucas is our ranger, Jess is our scholar, and El is our mage!"

"El? Who's El?"

Max noticed how Jess' expression immediately changed, her anger turned to immediate sadness and heartbroken.

"Someone. No one." Mike answered, his tone softening a ton.

Also, Jess glared at him after he said 'no one'.

"Someone or no one?"

"She was in our party a long time ago. She moved away, okay?" Mike

snapped, gripping onto Jess' hand.

They walk away only for Max to skateboard her way towards them.

"She was a mage? Well, what could she do? Like, magic tricks or something?"

Mike and Jess looked towards each other, rolling their eyes.

"Well, I could be your zoomer."

"That's not even a real thing," Mike argued.

"It could be."

Max got on her skateboard and started rolling around the two.

"See? Zoomer."

"Mind-blowing." Jess and Mike say, looking at each other and rolling their eyes.

"Come on, you both know you're impressed."

Mike and Jess sighed, Jess shrugging.

It was *kinda* cool.

X

El was walking through the halls when;

"I don't see any tricks."(Mike)

"Yeah, you're just going around in a circle."(Jessie)

"If it's so easy, you try it."

"No." (Mike and Jessie)

El peeked out, gasping.

"Why not?"

"We don't know how." (Jessie)

"So, then you admit it's kind of impressive."

"I think if we spent, like, all day practicing, we could do it." (Mike)

El was walking towards the Gym doors, bracing herself to see them together.

"I would give you two a million bucks if you could."

"Okay, you're making me dizzy." (Mike)

"Yeah, me too." (Jessie)

"Please just stop." (Mike)

"I'll stop when I join your party."

"Come on, just stop." (Jessie)

"It's a simple question. Am I in or out?"

El let out a huge smile, her sadness immediately being temporarily forgotten when she finally saw Mike and Jessie through the window, in REAL LIFE.

El saw Mike and Jessie standing together, Jessie rolling her eyes, smirking at Mike as he grinned, turning around.

Her smile faded when she saw that the person, who she was wondering who they were talking to, was a girl.

She remembered what Jessie said about the girl.

"Well, everything was going well the first couple hours of trick-or-treating with the exception of a few people getting our costumes wrong when...this girl came along and ruined everything. She dragged Dustin and Lucas away from us and I swear I wanted to break her arm for making it so easy to distract them from hanging out with us. Mike wasn't pleased either and I swear to god if looks could kill, she would have been very dead."

El could tell behind the smirk and impressed look in Jessie's eyes that it was covering annoyance.

Plus, she didn't like how she was smiling at Mike.

She felt this hot, ugly feeling in her chest as she glared down at the *girl* and that *thing* she was riding around them.

It was making them dizzy.

She tilted her head, making her fall off her *thing*.

El watched as Jessie widened her eyes in shock, looking at her hands and touching her nose, watching her sigh in relief when she realized it wasn't her who did it.

But, her heart shattered when Mike;

"Jesus! Are you alright?"

"Yeah, yeah. I think so."

Her expression turned sad, her heart growing heavy as Mike helped up the *girl*, their hands touching.

X

"What happened?" Mike asked as Jess looked at Max, confusion in her eyes.

"I don't know. It was like a magnet or something pulling my board. I know that sounds crazy."

Jess widened her eyes, looking at Mike who had furrowed his eyebrows, looking towards her.

She shook her head, answering the question he had in his head.

It wasn't her.

So...that would only mean...

They both turned to the gym door, holding onto each other's hands.

They both ran towards it, feeling hopeful that they'll see El.

They pushed open the door, looking both ways.

Nothing.

The hint of hope they both had vanished, Jess letting tears run down her cheeks as Mike sighed sadly.

He hugged her tightly, as she took a shaky breath in.

"Guys...I found him." (Will)

Jess immediately snapped out of her state, wiping her eyes as Mike got his Supercomm.

"Where?" (Dustin)

"In the bathroom by Mr. Salerno's." (Will)

"Copy that," Mike says, looking at Jess.

She nodded at him, both running towards the bathroom, hand in hand.

They were going to stick together, no matter what.

X

"Where's Dart?" Mike asked as they walked in, Jess looking around.

"I don't know. Not here." Dustin said.

"What?" Jess exclaimed.

"He said by Salerno's, right?" Max asked.

"Yeah, maybe Will has him."

Jess froze, turning to Dustin.

"Where IS Will?"

Where was her 'brother'?

12. Chapter 12

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess generally just has a bad day.

Jess ran out the bathroom, ignoring everyone's calls, getting a bad feeling.

"WILL!!" she screamed, running through the school halls.

She felt this her gut telling her to check outside.

She ran outside, gasping when she saw a figure.

"WILL!" she screamed.

She ran up to the field, running up to Will.

"Will!" she exclaimed, touching his shoulder.

She gasped when she disappeared from the field, darkness surrounding her but not touching her.

She stared, horrified as it consumed Will.

She suddenly snaps out of it, breathing heavily.

"Jess!"

She turned to see Mike run up to her and Will, seeing Lucas at a distance go back to the school.

"M-M-Mike, t-t-t-there's s-s-s-s-s-s- FUCK!" she stutters, swearing when she couldn't get it out, shaking violently.

Mike looked between from Jess' shaking and Will's convulsing.

"You saw something, didn't you?" Mike realized, causing Jess to nod, tears running down her cheeks.

He walks over to Will and put his hand on his shoulder, shaking him

lightly.

"Will."

They turned to see the boys and Max with Joyce.

"Jess just found him like this!"

"I think he's having another episode!"

Joyce grabbed onto Will's shoulders.

Jess hugged onto Mike, sobbing into his chest, shaking violently.

"Will! Will! Will! Sweetie, wake up! It's Mom! Will!"

Dustin watched as Mike hugged Jess protectively, getting worried about how much she was shaking and sobbing.

"Will, wake up! Can you hear me? Will, please, just wake up."

The gang looked at each other in worry and in panic, Jess' grip on Mike tightening.

"Please, wake up! It's Mom! It's me!"

Will suddenly gasps, opening his hazel eyes.

Jess let go of Mike, walking towards Will who just stared at her, an emotionless expression on his face.

She hugged Will tightly, catching everyone by surprise.

She leaned into his ear.

"I don't know what the fuck was all that blackness surrounding you, but I swear to you, I'm gonna help you get it the fuck out of your body," she whispered to him, only for him to hear.

He hugged back, tightening his grip on his 'little sister'.

"Please hurry."

X

Jess watched as Will and Joyce went back to the car, the boys and Max standing next to her.

"Okay, that totally freaked me out."

Jess felt her blood boil as she glanced at Max.

"Did that not freak you guys out?"

"Oh, of course not *Maxine*, I wasn't fucking shaking and sobbing as we watched our best friend go through an episode in front of our eyes," Jess says, sarcasm dripping from her words as Mike put his hand on her shoulder, as if to say 'calm down'.

Dustin furrows his eyebrows at Jess' snappiness.

"Two episodes in two days," Lucas says.

"It's getting worse," Mike says.

"No shit." Jess states.

"You think it's True Sight?" Lucas asks.

"What's True Sight?" Max asks.

Mike and Jess looked to Lucas, giving him a look to 'shut the hell up'.

Max didn't know about last year, and it has to keep it that way.

"It's nothing."

Jess sighs as the car drives off.

"Well, I'm going back home," she mumbles, walking to the bike rack.

"Wait, Jess!"

She turned to see Dustin run up to her.

"Can I ask you something?"

Jess shrugged.

"Sure, I guess."

"What do you have against Max?"

Oh...this.

Jess rolled her eyes.

Might as well tell him the truth.

"I don't like her. Is that a crime?"

"Why don't you? I thought you would be happy to have another girl in the group."

Her blood boiled, her eyes narrowing.

"Not only that, a girl that's completely badass!"

"SO WAS EL!" Jess yelled, gritting her teeth.

Dustin froze, his eyes widening.

"EL WAS BADASS AND COOL AND MY SISTER!!"

Jess was sobbing, tears running down.

"And now you and Lucas are trying to replace her with some girl who skateboards." she hissed.

"Jess-"

"No, Dustin. Just admit it, you never thought how I would feel about having *Maxine* in the group after losing my sister."

Jess was going to regret what she said and did afterward in a couple hours if not days;

"You know what?"

She removed the hat on her head and threw it at Dustin.

"I'm done waiting. I don't care if you figured out your feelings and have yet to tell me. I'm done."

Dustin had barely caught the hat, horror on his expression.

He had looked up to see Jess running to the bicycle rack, pulling her bike and riding away.

"No. No! Jess!"

X

Jess sobbed as she rode back to her house.

She hated how Dustin brought Max in the group without a single thought, without realizing how she felt.

She knew that her original reason was because of her jealousy towards the redhead, and she knew that was beyond stupid and cliche.

But after Mike revealed his reasons for not liking the girl, she started putting two and two together and that only *fueled* her hatred towards her.

She knows that it wasn't Max's fault.

She didn't know how important El was to Jess and Mike, not realizing that the reason they hated her was because they saw her as a replacement that Dustin and Lucas brought in for El.

And yet, she still couldn't help but be a total bitch to the girl.

She reached to her house, pushing aside her bike and running up to the door, unlocking it telekinetically and closing it and locking it telekinetically as well.

She ran up to her room, grabbing her photo album, flipping through the pages until she landed on the page that had the two Polaroid photos of El that she had sneaked without El's knowing.

She smiled sadly at the one with El's peaceful face with the blonde

wig as she slept on Jess' lap.

El had loved wearing that wig, loving the feeling of having hair, regardless if it was fake or not.

She looked at the one where she had snuck a picture of Mike and El, both talking in a private conversation.

She smiled at the picture of El's smile at Mike who had his mouth open, a smile hidden in his lips.

No wonder Mike stole her photo album for that extremely, mentally, exhausting week he had.

It helped him calm his nerves as it was helping hers.

But...as always...

It was never enough.

She wanted El to be back home.

She looked up, begging fate to please...

Bring her back to her and Mike.

To end their suffering.

Please...

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm lowkey thinking of writing a oneshot where the three of them are one couple.

Like how people ship Milevill (Mike, El, and Will) and (IDK their ship name) Nancy, Jonathan, and Steve together.

I want to write a oneshot where Mike, El, and Jess are together where it's just full of fluff (and angst).

Like in another universe, they'd TOTALLY be

together.

13. Chapter 13

Summary for the Chapter:

El gets grounded...she does NOT take it well.

El was walking through the forest, her thumb tracing over her necklace over and over again.

She HATED that she couldn't talk to Mike and Jessie.

And it was because of that *girl*.

That fucking *girl*.

Jessie was right.

She ruins everything.

She walked to where the cabin was and stopped, seeing Hopper there, smoking.

What was it that Jessie says when everything just got worse?

Oh, right.

Fucking shit.

She was NOT in the mood to be lectured for sneaking out of the cabin.

She sighs, knowing that whatever was going to happen next was NOT going to end well...for both her AND Hopper.

She breathed in and out, deciding to...what was it called again?

Just get it over with.

Yeah, that's it.

She walked towards the cabin, not even glancing at Hopper as she did so.

She didn't even care to look back as he trailed in after her, slamming the door closed.

"Friends don't lie.' Isn't that your bullshit saying?"

She decided to ignore that comment, heading to her room, wanting to escape from the bad events that happened when she tried to reunite with Mike and Jess.

"Hey, hey! Hey! Don't walk away from me!"

She turned to as Hopper slammed her door back open, his expression angry.

She stared at him with annoyance and hidden anger.

She just WANTED to fall asleep so she can escape today's doing.

El took off the jacket she had on, tossing it on her bed as Hopper asked;

"Where'd you go on your little field trip, huh? Where?"

Hopper had a rising suspicion.

"Did you go see Mike and/or Jess?"

He was so angry at her carelessness that he missed the sudden flash of sadness that appeared on her face.

"They didn't see me," she answers, disappointment and heartbreak evident in her tone, her eyes watering.

She WANTED to see them.

She WANTED to tell them that she was being safely hidden, that she was being taken care of.

She WANTED to tell them that she wanted to come home to them, but couldn't.

That they would have still been together if the Bad Men weren't at Mike's house.

"Yeah, well, that mother and her daughter did and they called the cops."

Shit.

That's how he knew.

"Now, did anyone else see you?" Hopper asked, now in front of her.

She felt her frustration increase and her patience wearing thin as she glared at Hopper.

"Anyone at all? Come on, I need you to think!"

"Nobody saw me!" El snapped, clenching her fists.

Hopper sighs, walking to her dresser.

"You put us in danger. You realize that, right?"

She didn't fucking care anymore.

After everything that had happened in the 353 days with her friends, she could care less about her own safety.

"You promised...I go!" El exclaims, pointing an accusing finger at him, her voice breaking.

"AND I NEVER LEAVE! NOTHING EVER HAPPENS!!" she screamed, her pent-up anger snapping.

"Yeah! Nothing happens and you stay safe!" Hopper yells, slamming his fist on her dresser, causing her to flinch.

Safe?

SAFE?!

SHE'S SO SICK, AND TIRED OF THAT EXCUSE WHEN IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE MIKE AND JESSIE BEING SAFE!!

AND THEY'RE NOT EVEN SAFE FROM THEMSELVES!!

"YOU LIE!!" she screamed.

"I don't lie! I protect and I feed and I teach!"

El nodded, sarcastically believing his excuse.

"And all I ask of you is that you follow three simple rules. Three rules. And you know what?"

She breathed in and out shakily.

"YOU CAN'T EVEN DO THAT!"

Hopper leaves her room, causing her to slam her dresser in anger.

"You're grounded. You know what that means? That means no Eggos..."

She froze, remembering that term...

"I was grounded today for cursing out Mr. Kowalski after class. A kid from our class asked about his opinion on Carrie by Stephen King, a horror book that Jess REALLY loves, especially now. He said that the main character Carrie was pathetic and couldn't handle herself. It pissed me off to no end because...Carrie has telekinetic abilities like you and is being bullied at school. I don't know the whole plot of the story, just the basics from Jess but, I told him to 'Shut up you asshole!'. Totally worth it seeing Jess sending me a grateful smile - the first time she smiled in a while too - and flipped him off on her way out. Can't hang out with our friends outside of school for two weeks though."

It stood for a punishment if a kid did something that was deemed naughty by their legal guardian/parent.

"And no TV for a week."

El tensed at the sound of the TV privilege being taken away from her.

No.

NO!

She glared down at the TV, keeping it in its place when Hopper attempted to take it away.

Hopper looked up to see El glaring down, blood running down her nose.

He sighed, annoyance in his voice.

"All right, knock it off. Let go."

El shook her head.

He can take away her Eggos for as long as he wanted...

He is NOT taking away the TV.

Hopper tried taking it again, it still not budging.

"Okay. Two weeks."

El refused to let go of it, not letting him take it away.

"Let go!"

She shook her head.

"A month."

"No," she says stubbornly, her eyes narrowing.

Hopper sighs.

"Well, congratulations. You just graduated from no TV for a month to no TV at all!" he says, yanking the cord.

El's eyes widened in horror.

"NO!"

She ran towards it, her chest bubbling with a sudden pain she was familiar with.

"No! No. No!"

She tried to fix it, her eyes watering with tears.

The TV was the only SAFE way of looking after Jessie and Mike!!

She let out a shaky sob as she realized now there was no safe way to make sure that Mike and Jessie were okay.

"You have got to understand that there are consequences to your actions."

A fury of anger rose in her blood.

Hopper had no IDEA how much emotional pain she went through not knowing how was Jessie or Mike in that month in the woods.

Or how grief-stricken she was when they both were in danger.

Now, she has no SAFE way to make sure they don't do something stupid like what they did again!!

She turned to him, anger burning in her eyes.

"YOU ARE JUST LIKE PAPA!!" she screamed.

She didn't mean it.

She just wanted to hurt him like he had just hurt her.

"Really? I'm just like that psychotic son of a bitch?"

Tears were welling up in her eyes.

How the hell did other kids deal with fights with their guardians/parents?

"Wow! All right. You wanna go back in the lab?"

She shook her head, not believing what he just said.

"One phone call. I can make that happen."

"I hate you!" she yells out, pointing an accusing finger at him.

"Yeah, well, I'm not so crazy about you either."

"You know why? 'Cause you're a brat."

El stared at him with sudden anger, her eyes threatening to pour down her tears at what he called her, breathing in and out shakily.

"You know what that word means? How about that be your word for the day, huh? Brat. Why don't we look it up? B-R-A-T. Brat."

He tossed the dictionary at her and she stopped it, using her telekinetic powers, shaking angerly.

Hopper stopped, seeing the anger full-fledged on her face.

She threw the dictionary back at him, her anger blinding her.

"Hey! What the hell is wrong with you?"

He walked towards her, and she moved the couch to the side, blocking him.

"Hey!"

She turned to leave to her room, her hands shaking with fury.

"Hey!"

She made the bookcase fall, the tears finally running down her cheeks.

"Hey! Hey!"

She slammed her bedroom door closed, locking it.

"Open this door!"

She went to a corner of her room, sliding down on the floor, sobbing out her tears.

"Open the damn door! You wanna go out in the world? You better grow up!"

All her pent up feelings she had about today's horrible day was about to burst as she continued to sob.

"Grow the hell up!"

She let out a frustrated, heartbroken, angry, saddened scream, throwing her fists up and down, making the windows, light bulbs, anything that was glass destroyed with her telekinesis.

El sobbed, her fingers rubbing the charms on her bracelet...

...Rubbing the *MIKE* and *JESS* charms.

She just WANTED to go back home.

14. Chapter 14

Summary for the Chapter:

After a talk with Nancy, Jess goes to Dustin and they talk and apologize to each other...you could say they 'kissed and make up'.

Do you like those grapes, Holly?" Mike was asking Holly when the doorbell rang, Ms. Wheeler getting up to answer it.

Holly had nodded when Mike heard;

"Oh, Jess sweetheart. Hi."

Mike got up from the table running to the front door where his mom was hugging Jess.

"Jess!"

Jess turned to Mike and smiled at him, running up to him and hugging him.

"I r-r-ran out groceries y-y-yesterday. Can I e-e-eat with y-y-you guys?"

"Of course! We're always happy to have you." Mrs. Wheeler says, completely oblivious to the fact that Jess was stuttering.

Mike did, and he grabbed her hand giving her a reassuring smile.

She smiled back, greeting everyone a good morning and hugged Nancy.

"Hola, hermana major." She smiles, causing Nancy to laugh.

"Hey little sister, you doing alright?"

She motions towards her arms, and Jess has to hold back from rolling her eyes.

"I'm fine...I am...just dealing with boy trouble."

Nancy scoffs.

"Obviously with my brother and his friends."

Jess hits her shoulder, causing Nancy to wince.

"Damn, have you been working out?"

"Parkour, weightlifting, boxing...yeah."

She sighs.

"I got into a fight with Dustin yesterday."

Nancy frowned.

"Oh jeez, that's new. It's usually my brother, Lucas, or very rarely, Will. You never had a fight with Dustin, was it bad?"

Jess nodded.

"How bad?"

"Me-throwing-the-hat-he-gave-me-and-saying-I'm-done-waiting bad."

Nancy lets out a whistle.

"Yikes! What was it about?"

Jess looked at Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler before reaching on her tiptoes and whispered in her ear;

"Jealousy and... replacing El with that girl."

Nancy sighed, looking at Jess.

Of course the jealousy wasn't the only reason with Jess, otherwise, they wouldn't have this fight.

It was about the telekinetic girl that her little brother lied about not liking and who Jess saw as a sister.

"Maybe they aren't trying to replace her, maybe...just like how when you first moved here when you were seven years old, they saw that she needed a friend and they're trying to introduce her to the group. It just so happens she's cool and it feels like they're replacing El but, they're just trying to be friends with her. Besides, I know no one can replace your sister, but, I think you should try being friends with this girl."

Jess smiled, and then looked down.

"Now I feel guilty...I've been a total bitch."

"It's okay, just try to make it up to her, maybe explain why you acted that way. I think she'll get it."

Jess nods, and sighs.

"And about Dustin...I regret everything, I do. I just...I need time."

"Understandable, just make sure you make things right, okay?"

Jess nods, knowing her next stop after breakfast.

X

Dustin had opened the door when he jumped at the girl standing at his steps.

It was Jess.

"Jess!"

Jess smiled at him.

"Hey, Dustin. Look, I'm sorry about yesterday. I didn't mean any of it. Yes, I did feel that you were trying to replace El with Max but, I know now that wasn't the case. She was new and had no friends and, you and Lucas were just trying to become her friends. I'm sorry I was being a bitch."

Dustin smiled at her, a huge weight coming off his shoulder.

"No, no Jess! It's okay! I'm sorry if we gave you that impression! I mean, Max's cool, no doubt about that but El, she will ALWAYS have a special place in The Party and our hearts that no one can compare to."

Jess smiles, and hugs Dustin, her grin widening when he hugged back.

When they pulled apart, they locked eyes for a second, Jess looking down on his lips.

She hesitated before kissing him, surely catching him off guard.

But, she was surprised when he kissed back, butterflies exploding in her chest.

It was better than the first kiss they both had, the first one being completely one-sided.

They pulled back, both of their faces bright red.

Jess smiled sheepishly and Dustin lets his goofy grin expand on his face.

"So...school?" Jess asks, giggling.

Dustin nods before stopping.

"Wait!"

He runs back into the house, a few minutes later with the hat she threw at him.

"I figured you'd want this back."

Jess grinned, taking it and placing it back on her head.

"That I do Dustin, let's go."

X

They both parked their bikes, getting off,

"Where are they?" Jess asked.

"I don't know," Dustin says, blushing when she grabbed his hand.

They looked around until Dustin nudged her, causing her to look and hear Mike talking.

"Stop being a baby and do it already!"

They both ran towards the direction of the voices, both still holding hands.

"This is so disgusting. Is this really necessary?"

They both walked up to Mike and Max, both holding long sticks while someone (most likely Lucas) was moving in the dumpster.

"What the hell's going on?" Dustin asked.

"What do you think? We're looking for Dart." Mike said.

At that moment, a trash bag came out of nowhere, causing Jess to exclaim, backing up with Dustin.

"Jesus!" (Dustin)

"Oh!" (Max)

"Ugh!" (Mike)

Lucas jumped out of the dumpster, looking at Dustin and Jess.

"Well, well, well. Look who finally decided to show up. After I drew the short straw. Real convenient."

"Well excuse you, Sinclair! We were preoccupied!" Jess exclaimed.

"With what?" Mike asked.

Jess looks at Dustin and smirks, him looking down bashfully.

Lucas made a sound of disgust.

"Oh, calm down Lucas! You make it sound like they had sex! It's just kissing!" Max scoffs, causing Jess to smile at her.

"Besides, you stink!"

She stands next to Jess, causing her to smirk at Lucas' defeated expression.

"Hey, MadMax." Jess grins, winking at her.

Max lets a small, relieved smile appear on her face.

"Hey, GRLPWR."

"Hi, Max." Dustin greets, grinning at her.

"Hi..."

Jess turned to Mike.

"Where's Will?"

"He'll be here."

"Are you two just going to stand there making eyes at each other? Or you two gonna help?" Lucas asked, tossing them their sticks.

Jess catches hers while threatening;

"Another word out of you Sinclair about me and Dustin, and I'll shove this stick right down your throat."

Max laughs as they poked the trash bags, feeling for Dart.

15. Chapter 15

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess reveals to Dustin and Lucas she has powers...finally.

"All living things, from complex mammals to single-celled organisms, instinctively respond to danger. Expose a bacterium to a toxic chemical, and it will flee. Or deploy some other defense mechanism. We're very much the same. When we encounter danger, our hearts start pounding. Our palms start to sweat. These are the signs of the physical and emotional state we call...fear."

Jess sighed, looking back at Mike who was staring at the empty seat next to him.

"Let's check on him after school, alright?" She whispered, causing him to nod.

"Yeah, lets."

X

Hopper was hammering planks of wood over the windows.

He turned to see El had been watching him before she closed the door.

He walked to the door, sighing.

"Hey, kid."

El was by the door on the other side, her eyes red-rimmed.

She was stroking her necklace over and over again.

"Listen, um...about last night, I, uh..."

El looked away, not wanting to hear it.

"I want this place cleaned up by the time I get back and then I'll consider fixing the TV. You hear me?"

El looked down, wiping her dried eyes, from crying to sleep.

She walked to the bed and grabbed the teddy bear, pressing her nose into it, smelling the faint scent of Colombian flowers.

X

Jess was standing next to Mike as he called the Byers house.

He sighed as he placed the phone back.

"Not answering?" Jess asked.

"Obviously."

They ran back to the group.

"Anything?" Lucas asked.

"We need to talk. AV room. Right now." Mike says, running up the steps.

Jess smiled at Max, who smiled back as she followed Mike.

"Party members only."

Jess furrowed her eyebrows.

Why-

Her eyes widened.

Oh...

"Come on, Mike," Dustin says, Jess, grabbing his arm.

"She doesn't know yet, Dustin," she whispered.

Dustin showed a look of realization of what she meant.

"No! This is non-negotiable." Mike says, walking inside.

"Sorry, Max," Dustin says.

"Sorry."

Jess sighed before walking to Max.

"Don't worry about it. It took a while for me to become part of their party when I immigrated here from Colombia when I was seven years old. Besides, this meeting is probably has something to do about Will that...I'm afraid we can't share with you...yet. Maybe one day when we trust you enough. Okay?"

Max nodded, smiling at her.

"Oh, and by the way, sorry I was being mean to you. It's just...I thought the boys were replacing El with you and..."

"You two were close by the sound of it," Max says, nodding.

Jess nodded.

"Well, I hope one day you can tell me about her...and hopefully one day if she comes back, I can meet her?"

Jess swallowed her saliva, tears watering.

"Yeah, yeah hopefully."

Max grins.

Jess smiled back before walking in, catching up to the boys and grabbing Dustin's hand.

X

"Will didn't want us to tell anyone, but on Halloween night he saw a sort of shadow in the sky." Mike was saying, Jess, sitting next to him.

"A shadow? W-What kind of shadow?" Lucas asked.

"We don't know. But it scared him." Jess says.

"And if Will really has True Sight...I mean if he could really see into the Upside Down, maybe he saw that shadow again yesterday."

"He did," Jess says, making the boys look at her.

"How do you know?" Dustin asked.

Jess hesitated before answering:

"Cause when I touched him, I saw this darkness consuming Will. It didn't touch me but, it was invading him."

Jess shudders before turning to Mike.

"That's what I was trying to tell you yesterday. I guess I was in shock of what I saw."

Mike nodded before hugging her.

"So that's why he was frozen like that?" Dustin asked.

"Yes," Jess answered.

"Can it hurt him?" Lucas asked her.

Jess looked at him.

"I mean, if this shadow thing isn't from our world..."

"I'm not sure," Jess admitted before turning to Dustin.

"Dustin?"

"Well, if you're in another plane, you can't interact with the material plane, so theoretically, no, the shadow can't hurt him," Dustin says.

"Yeah, if that's even what's happening," Mike mumbles, Jess nodding.

"This isn't DnD, this is real life."

"So what do we do?" Lucas asks.

"We acquire more knowledge. Jess and I'll go to Will's after school.

See what happens."

"And while we're there, I'll try to see if I can communicate with this shadow thing that has invaded him," Jess adds.

"You guys stay here and find Dart," Mike says to the two of them.

"Dart? What's he gotta do with this?" Dustin asked.

"Will heard him in the Upside Down. I don't know how, but he's gotta be connected to all this. He's gotta be. If we find Dart, maybe we can solve this thing. Maybe we can find Will."

"I still have one question," Lucas says, looking at Jess.

"How was Jess able to see the shadow consume Will?"

Jess looked at Mike, who nodded.

She looks at Dustin's hat and makes it float.

Lucas jumped, his jaw dropping.

"Holy shit!"

Dustin looks up, his eyes widening.

"Oh my-"

"I've had them since..."

Lucas and Dustin turned to her when she lowered her head.

"Since El vanished."

"Why didn't you tell us?" Lucas asked.

"I was scared, not because of your reactions, but because at first, I couldn't really control them."

"Mike knew before us?" Dustin asked.

"He was there when I first used my powers...so was El. It was the

both of us that flipped that van, not just her."

"And they both helped kill the men that were about to shoot us," Mike added.

"Holy shit...I'm dating a superhero!" Dustin exclaims, causing Jess to blush, smiling.

Lucas rolled his eyes but he smirked at her.

"So that's why whenever someone insults us they face clumsy 'accidents'."

Jess laughs, smiling at him.

"Obviously. Though, I haven't yet to make someone piss their pants yet."

"Well now that we know, you should!" Dustin exclaims, hugging her and kissing her cheek.

She blushes a bright red and giggles, Mike and Lucas rolling their eyes.

But they were right.

Now they had TWO superheroes in The Party.

16. Chapter 16

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess attempts to contact El to see if she's alive...

El was trying to fix the TV (and failing), the cabin still a mess.

She sighed and got up and looked at the TV, picking up the cord Hopper tore out.

She threw it down in frustration, hating that there was a possibility that she missed Mike's and Jessie's 354th call, that they still were waiting.

She looked around and sighed.

Well, there was only one way to get it fixed now so she doesn't miss the 355th call.

X

She started cleaning the cabin, using her powers to bring up the bookshelf that she made fall.

She put all the books and board games that were on the bookshelf back where it was.

She swept the floor of the broken glass, moving the couch aside with her foot when she saw a latch under it.

She tilted her head, moving the couch more with her telekinesis.

She put the broom down, lifting the hatch.

There was a secret room, filled with boxes.

She got a flashlight, looking down at the room as she looked around, reading the labels.

She froze when she saw one that read;

HAWKINS LAB

She grabbed it, bringing it back to the living room.

El opened the box, grabbing a folder and sighing before opening it.

She froze when she saw a picture of a little girl, few freckles painted across her cheeks.

Jessie..."

X

El was placing papers all over the floor, some she kept to herself because they were information about Jessie.

But, none of the papers so far had mentioned about her having powers.

So, the question about how exactly Jessie got her powers were still left unanswered.

She grabbed another folder, tossing the papers aside.

She grabbed another folder, this one reading;

IVES, TERRY

"Ives...Terry."

She opened the folder, the first article talking about a stolen child.

She looked down to see a picture of a woman.

She turned to another article, the stolen child is having a name.

"Jane."

She pulled out a photo and gasped, seeing the woman, Papa, and two other adults she recognized as;

"Jessie's Mama and Papa."

She frowned, looking now at Papa and the other woman.

"Papa."

She pointed her finger at him and drew it to the other woman.

She frowned, deciding to find out if what she thought was true.

She looked at the TV, knowing that option was a no.

Her eyes darted to the radio.

She knew it was a risk, but, she didn't care.

She needed to know.

She grabbed the radio and turned it until static was heard.

She got her blindfold and tied it around her head, covering her eyes.

El grabbed onto the photo, trying to clear her mind.

She lifted the photo and pressed it against her chest.

She opened her eyes and she was in the void, seeing a rocking chair with a woman sitting on it.

"Three to the right. Four to the left."

She walked towards her, swallowing her saliva.

"Rainbow. Three to the right. Four to the left."

She stood in front of her.

"Rainbow. Three to the right. Four to the left. Four-fifty..."

El watched with wonder in her eyes.

The woman opened her eyes, causing El to gasp.

"Jane."

El gasped, her throat caught in a lump.

"Mama?"

She reached out to hold her hand.

El froze when she vanished, her eyes widening.

"Mama!"

She tried to move her hands against the wisp.

But, her Mama didn't come back.

She stepped back, tears forming.

"Mama?!" She cried.

She got on her knees, sobbing.

"Mama! MAMA!!" She shrieked, sobbing.

She tore off the blindfold, tears running down her face.

"Mama..."

She covered her mouth with her hand, sobbing.

"Mama!"

X

Jess was riding her bike when she gasped.

"Mike, wait!"

He turned to look at her, stopping as she rode until she was next to him.

"We were supposed to try to contact her, remember? We weren't able to the day after Halloween because of what happened."

Mike widened his eyes.

"Oh shit, you're right."

They pushed their bikes into the woods, Jess grabbing her Supercomm and turning it to a static channel.

She set it down and closed her eyes, Mike looking around to see if anyone was watching.

He heard a gasp, and he looked to see blood running down her nose.

She was in.

X

Jess was looking around in awe.

So this is where El found Will and Barb...

She heard crying, causing her to turn and see a person with a mop of hair crying.

"Mama!"

She froze, recognizing that voice.

She swallowed, walking up.

"¿Once?"

The girl stopped, gasping loudly.

She stood up, turning.

Jess froze, when she saw the girl staring at her was...

"El?"

She walked up to her.

"Jessie?"

Jess gasped, sobbing out in shock.

She reached out to touch her cheek, pressing her palm against it.

Suddenly, a wave of memories hit her, starting from when she was three years old.

"Hola."

"Hi!"

"¡Hermana!"

"Sister!"

"Once, you can do this. Calm down and focus."

"Jessie, breathe."

"¡¡¡ONCE!!! ¡¡¡ONCE!!!"

"JESSIE!!! JESSIE!!!"

"WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN!! I PROMISE WE'LL FIND EACH OTHER AGAIN!! I PROMISE!!"

X

Jess gasped, opening her eyes to see that she was back in the woods, Mike watching her.

"Jess!"

She was panting heavily, tears running down.

"I-I-"

"Jess, breathe. Calm down."

She took a deep breath and looked at him.

"I think I saw her. I don't know where she is but, I think I saw her."

Mike widened his eyes.

"She...she has curly hair now, she was in a sweater and jeans...and...I remember everything now."

Jess let out a sob.

"We were both raised in the lab together from when we were three to when we were seven. We got separated from each other."

Jess sobbed, wiping her eyes as Mike hugged her, wiping the blood on her lip with his hand.

"Sorry...let's get to Will's."

Mike sighed, before looking at her.

"You know if you need to talk about it-"

"I know Mike. I know."

She smiled at him as he helped her up, knowing that she was probably feeling a bit weak from pushing herself.

He could see the veins popping against her face.

X

Mike knocked on the door.

"Hello? Will! Mrs. Byers?"

The door unlocks to reveal Joyce.

"Hey."

"Hey, Mama Byers."

"Hey, Mike, Jess."

"Is Will here?" Mike asked.

"You know what? Now is not a really good time."

"*¿Está bien?* (Is he okay?)" Jess asked.

Joyce sighs.

"Yeah. You know, he's...he's just not feeling real well. He's laying down, so I'll tell him you two stopped by, okay?" Joyce says, pushing them away.

Jess frowned before turning to her.

"It's about the shadow monster, isn't?" she asked.

Joyce turned to her.

"How'd you know?"

"She saw it when she touched Will yesterday," Mike answered.

"I saw it consuming him," Jess growls, clenching her fists.

"And I want to get it the fuck out of him."

17. Chapter 17

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike and Jess talk to Will about him being a spy...the next day, it's revealed Hopper's in trouble to Jess' horror.

Meanwhile, El visits her Mama.

"It's like...It's like I feel what the shadow monster's feeling. See what he's seeing."

Mike and Jess were looking around Will's room, at the drawings on the walls.

"Like in the Upside Down?" Mike asked.

Jess turned to see Will nod.

"Some of him is there...but some of him is here, too."

Jess frowned, walking towards him.

"Here, like, in this house?" Mike asked.

"In this house and...in me."

Jess went to sit next to him, holding onto his hand, gasping when she saw what the Shadow Monster was seeing.

She snapped out of it, breathing out shakily, Mike looking at her with a worried glance.

"It's like...It's like he's reaching into Hawkins more and more. And the more he spreads, the more connected to him I feel."

"And the more you see these now-memories," Jess says.

"At first I just felt it in the back of my head. I didn't even really know it was there. It's like when you have a dream and you can't remember

it unless you think really hard. It was like that. But now it's like...Now I remember. I remember all the time."

"Maybe...Maybe that's good." Mike says, causing Jess to look at him with shock.

"Good?" Will scoffs, looking at him.

"Yeah Michael, how is that good?" Jess says, squeezing Will's hand.

"Just think about it, Will. You're like a spy now. A super spy. Spying on the shadow monster. If you know what he's seeing and feeling, maybe that's how we can stop him. Maybe all of this is happening for a reason."

"You really think so?" Will asked.

"Yeah. Yeah, I really do."

Will looked at the drawing of the shadow monster, making Jess narrow her eyes at it, and flipping it off.

Mike turned to look at it, frowning.

"What if he figures out we're spying on him?" Will asked, shaking more heavily.

He sniffles.

"What if he spies back?"

"He won't," Mike says.

"How do you know?"

Mike grabbed his hand, making Will stop shaking.

"We won't let him."

Will turned to Jess.

"Can you-"

"Of course Will. I'll check in every now and then as a precaution...besides..."

She glared at the drawing again.

"I'm not scared of him."

X

Will jolted upwards, gasping.

"Will, what's wrong?"

Jess got up, Will looking at the two that were sharing a sleeping bag with fear in his eyes.

She scrambled up and grabbed his hands, gasping when she saw the now-memories.

Hopper was trapped.

She snapped out of it, breathing heavily, looking at Will with wide eyes.

"No...no...that wasn't-"

Will nodded, before turning to Mike.

"It's Hopper. He's in trouble."

X

"Mom?" Will asked, the three of them going to the living room.

"Mom?" Will asked again when she didn't respond.

Jess was scratching her arms in worry, Mike grabbing her arm while giving her a look.

"Sorry." She whispered.

"Mom?" Will said, placing a hand on her shoulder.

Joyce gasped before turning to him.

"Yeah?"

"I saw him."

"You saw who, baby?"

"Hopper. I think he's in trouble. I think he's going to die."

Jess was about to burst into tears, breathing in heavily.

X

"All right. I think this is it. Five-one-five Larrabee, right?"

El turned to the man who drove her to her Mama's house.

"Yes. Five-fifteen."

The man chuckled.

"All right, 'Five-fifteen'. Sure."

El opened the car door, turning back to say;

"Thank you."

"Hey. You apologize to your mama, yeah? Huh? Must be scared half to death. How long's it been?"

El frowned, deciding to tell the truth in some form.

"Long time." She says, closing the door.

She steps towards the trail, a bag in her arms filled with stuff she needed.

She looked at the mailbox, seeing the last name 'Ives' on it.

X

She walked to the end of the trail, seeing the house.

She walked to the door, sighing before knocking on it.

She waited before knocking again, flinching when someone yelled;
"Go away! I'm not interested!"

She sighed, before knocking again, this time more rapidly.

The door opened slightly to show a woman, who looked annoyed.

"Look, I don't want your Thin Mints, all right, kid?"

"Thin Mints?" El asked.

"Or your religious mumbo jumbo. Whatever you're selling, I ain't buying, okay?"

She closed the door.

El frowned, before glaring at the door, unlocking it.

She made the door open, blood running down her nose.

"I want to see Mama." She told the woman standing there, in shock.

X

El followed the woman - who was revealed to be her Aunt Becky - to the living room, where her Mama was.

"Mama?" El asked, reaching for her necklace, rubbing it.

"Breathe. Sunflower. Rainbow."

"Mama, can you hear me?" she asked, now reaching for her bracelet, rubbing one of the charms, feeling the *M* shape on it.

"Four-fifty. Breathe. Sunflower. Rainbow."

"Mama? It's me..."

She hesitated before saying her name.

"Jane."

She placed her hand on top of her Mama's.

"I'm here now."

Her Mama turned to look at her, causing **Jane** to breathe in shakily.

"Breathe. Sunflower. Rainbow. Four-fifty."

Jane furrowed her eyebrows before turning to Becky.

"Breathe. Sunflower."

"What's wrong with Mama?"

Becky looked as if she was going to cry, looking down.

"There's something I need to tell you about Terry. About your mom."

X

Jess was pacing back and forth while Will was drawing where he saw Hopper.

"Hey, is this where you saw him? Is this where you saw Hopper?"

Jess looked up from where she was, walking over to the drawing.

"I think so. Yeah."

Jess took the drawing, breathing shakily.

"Daddy..."

Ignoring the shocked looked on their faces, she ran around the house, looking for the spot where it matched.

"Here!" Mike yelled, causing Jess to look where he was, running up to him.

Joyce followed behind her, getting the tape.

"Okay, so...so Hopper is here?" Joyce asked.

"Yeah, now we need to find out where here is, right?"

"Right."

"Did he say anything? I mean, before he left?" Jess asked.

"Uh, some...something about vines?"

They heard a car approach, causing Jess to look up.

"Dad..."

"Hopper."

They ran up, only to see it wasn't Hopper, it was Bob Newby.

Jess turned to Mike and hugged him, shaking violently.

"I'm worried about him," she whispered, hearing Joyce open the door.

"I know." he sighs, hugging her as well, placing a kiss on top of her head.

Joyce walked in, with Bob following behind.

Jess furrowed her eyebrows, looking at Joyce.

"Mommy?"

Joyce widened her eyes at what she called her, as did Mike but, she smiled and said;

"He can help."

18. Chapter 18

Summary for the Chapter:

Bob reveals the tunnels that Will drew is a map of Hawkins, meanwhile, El realizes her Mama wants to 'talk'.

Jess glanced at Bob as he looked at the drawings up on the wall, nervously waiting for his reaction.

It's not often that they allow someone to know a bit of what goes on in their crazy lives.

"Huh."

Mike looked at Jess, her hand reaching for her arm, quickly grabbing it and squeezing it gently, preventing her from scratching it.

"Hmm."

He turned to Will.

"You drew all these yourself?"

Will nodded.

"Mm-hmm."

Bob made a face Jess couldn't really read properly.

It was a mix between being impressed and confused.

"Why, exactly?"

"I...I told you the rules. No questions, okay?" Joyce says, looking at him.

"Yeah."

"We...we just need you to help us figure out what..."

Jess follows Joyce as she walks towards the other room, turning back when Mike didn't follow her.

"Mike!"

Mike turns and walks towards her.

"Bob? Bob?" Joyce says, getting his attention.

"Over here."

They all follow Joyce as she marks the place where Hopper supposedly is.

"Where...where this is."

"That's the objective. Find the X." Mike says, Jess nodding.

"Yeah? What's at X? Pirate treasure?" he says, chuckling.

"It's not funny!" Jess snapped, Joyce, placing a hand on her shoulder.

For a second, she could have sworn that the heat had risen a bit, (which made Will flinch) until it decreased back to its cold weather.

"Bob, no questions."

Bob nodded, noticing how Jess snapped at him, as if she was really upset over something and her patience was really thin.

"Okay."

He sighs before turning to the boys and Jess.

"Let me talk to you for a second. Hang on, guys."

Jess sighed as they left, clutching her shirt, completely unaware of the fact her nose was bleeding, or that something was growing in her clenched hand.

Mike did though.

"Jess?"

She looks up at him, furrowing her eyebrows when he walked up, wiping her upper lip, revealing the blood.

She looked at her hands and gasped, a Cosmos flower in her palm.

She sent a scared, panicked look at Mike, shaking her head as she crumbled it in her fist.

"Hey, relax. Maybe this something from your past that isn't explained yet. I mean, you knew El before we all met her last year, maybe it's the same with this power." Mike says, pulling her to a chair at the table, sitting next to her.

She nods, only to jolt when Bob suddenly came and;

"And if that's Lake Jordan, then you can probably find...Yeah, that's, uh, Sattler's quarry."

She furrowed her eyebrows as he turned around.

"And if you just follow it naturally...it moves to...the Eno River. And there it is. That's the Eno, do you see it?"

Jess looked at Mike, who just shrugged.

"Okay, so the lines aren't roads. But they act like roads. And they act like roads cause when you follow 'em, you'll see...they don't go over water. And that's the giveaway. That's the giveaway. Ha!"

Jess looked around, her eyes widening as she realized what it was.

"It's not a puzzle." She whispered, looking at Bob, who grinned at her.

"It's a map of Hawkins!"

"Yes!" Bob says, chuckling.

The boys looked at each other, knowing that if their Scholar said it was true, then it was.

Bob turns to Will.

"Right, Will?"

Will didn't answer, but he didn't have to.

It was, in fact, a map of Hawkins.

X

"I just need a little help understanding, sweetie, okay?"

Jane was looking at her Mama, worry eating at her at the fact that she wasn't able to respond.

"Can you tell me where you came from? Where you've been all this time?"

Becky sighed as Jane remained unresponsive, still looking at her Mama.

"A policeman and a woman came looking for you last year. Did they find you?"

Jane swallowed, her eyes darting down at the question.

My name is Mike, short for Michael.

And my name is Jess, short for Jessica.

"She won't get better...will she?" She asks, still looking at her Mama.

Becky sighed, looking down.

"They don't think so, no."

Jane sniffles.

"But she's not in any pain. She's just stuck, they think. Like in a dream. A long dream."

Jane looked at her Aunt.

"A good dream?"

She wanted it to be a good dream that her Mama was stuck in, not a bad one.

"I hope so," Becky answered.

Jane sighs, looking at her Mama again.

"Is it the same dream?"

"We don't know. Sometimes she says different words. But usually those."

Jane cries softly, knowing that it wasn't fair for her Mama to suffer like this.

Becky reached out to her.

"She always believed that you were out there. She always believed that you would come home one day."

Jane looked at Becky, her eyebrows furrowing.

"Home?"

"Yeah, home." Becky cries.

Jane sniffed, reaching to Becky's hand, smiling slightly at her.

She liked the sound of that, she wasn't going to lie.

Friends don't lie.

But, she had to admit to herself that somewhere inside herself that she didn't REALLY feel at home.

"I just want to say El...welcome home."

"Um...I'm happy you're home."

"This is your new home."

X

Becky led her to a room, El letting a short gasp as she looked around it.

It was supposed to be her room.

She looked at Becky and then walked in, her chin wobbling as she looked around, walking to the crib.

She lets in a short gasp at the teddy bear, so similar to the one that Hopper gave her.

"Pretty."

It looked like the one that was once Jessie's...

The one that faintly smelled of Colombian flowers.

She pressed the teddy bear to her nose, expecting the smell of *home*.

Nothing.

"I can get you a real bed, and you stay here with me if you want. How's that sound?" Becky says, causing Jane to turn to her and back to the bear, trying not to be disappointed that it didn't smell like Jessie's bear...that it didn't smell homely.

She nodded, even though something inside her was telling her she didn't belong here, that her home was somewhere else.

"I just want to say El...welcome home."

"Um...I'm happy you're home."

"This is your new home."

She placed the teddy bear back in the crib, sighing.

"I wanna help you, but to really do that, I need you to talk to me, okay? Doesn't have to be now. Doesn't have to be today. But when you're ready. Okay?"

Jane nodded.

"Okay."

When she was ready.

She saw the lights flicker, causing her to walk up to it.

It flickered again.

"Oh, yeah, that."

Jane watched as the light flicker again.

"That happens sometimes. Old house, bad wiring..."

Jane turned her head as another light flickered.

"Or if you ask my crazy aunt Shirley, it's...haunted."

Jane had walked to the other light, looking at it.

More lights flickered, causing her to follow it, walking downstairs.

She looked around, waiting for another to flicker.

When one did, she walked towards it.

"Sweetie, really, it's just the wiring," Becky says.

"No," El says, remembering how she and Jessie used to communicate through Morse code before they forgot each other when they were in different rooms.

They made the lights flicker.

She turned to see her Mama, the lights flickering above her.

She turned to Becky before walking to her Mama.

She kneeled in front of her, already seeing the familiar blood on her upper lip.

"It's Mama."

She wiped the blood from it, her Mama still speaking the same words.

"I-I-I don't understand."

Jane felt a small hint of joy at the fact that-

"She knows I'm here."

The TV channels started changing, until it came to a static one.

Jane knew exactly what her Mama was trying to say.

"She wants to talk."

19. Chapter 19

Summary for the Chapter:

Bob helps narrow down when Hopper may be.
Meanwhile, Jane and her Mama 'talk'.

"All right. I'm 3.6 inches, what do you got?"

"I'm not sure. Mrs. Byers?" Mike called, waiting for Joyce to answer.

"Hold on...Twenty-one feet, four inches." She answers.

"What about Tippecanoe to Danford Creek?"

"D-Danford? Where's Danford?"

"¡Aquí!" Jess called from the other room.

"Dining room!" Will elaborated.

Joyce ran to them, pressing the measuring tape to the wall.

"Sixteen feet, ten inches."

"What about Danford to Jordan?"

Joyce sighs.

"Oh, come on. T-T-This has gotta be enough."

"It's not. It's...It's really not."

Jess follows Joyce, turning to see Mike follow up behind her, grabbing her hand and squeezing it gently.

"Okay. Can't you just figure it out?"

"W-Well it's hard. The ratio isn't exactly one-to-one. I mean if you are twisting my arm, and you are twisting my arm, I would say that the X is..."

Jess bit her lip, reaching for her necklace and rubbing it gently.

"Maybe a half mile southeast of Danford?"

Jess let out a cry of some sort of relief, knowing they had an idea of where Hopper was trapped.

"¡Gracias!" She exclaimed, running to Bob, pressing a kiss on his cheek.

"Thank you! Thank you!" Joyce exclaims, pressing a kiss to his other cheek.

Jess grabs the map, following Joyce and the boys out the house.

"What? Are we...we really going?"

X

"Like this?"

Terry showed Jane the cloth she cut, causing her to nod.

"Yes."

X

Static was hissing through the TV, Jane kneeling in front of her Mama.

"It's okay if I sit here, right?"

Jane put on the blindfold.

"Yes."

"A-And I won't mess it up or anything?"

"No."

"Okay...If you talk to Terry, will you tell her that I love her very much? And that I'm sorry I didn't believe-"

"Stop talking."

"Okay, sorry."

Jane focused on Terry's voice, on the words she kept repeating.

She opens her eyes, looking at her Mama.

"Breathe. Sunflower. Rainbow."

Jane started walking up to her.

"Three to the right. Four to the left. Four-fifty. Breathe."

"Mama?" Jane asks, steadyng herself.

"Sunflower. Rainbow."

"Mama, it's me..."

"Three to the right. Four to the left. Four-fifty."

"Jane."

"Breathe. Sunflower."

"I'm here now."

"Four-fifty. Breathe. Sunflower. Rainbow."

"I'm **home**."

Her Mama suddenly looked at her.

"No."

She grabs her hand, dragging Jane into the void again, this time, her Mama not in sight.

"Mama!"

She hears movement, causing her to turn and see her Mama, whimpering and sobbing, holding onto her belly.

Jane walked over to her, fear rising high, gasping when her Mama fell to the ground.

"Mama! Mama!"

She ran to her, holding onto her, trying to comfort her.

"Oh my baby!" her Mama sobbed.

"What do I do?" Mama, what do I do? Help me!" Jane exclaimed, panicking.

"Breathe. Breathe."

Jane becomes confused, turning to see Becky.

"Just breathe. **Breathe**. Just breathe, all right? They're on their way. They're on their way, okay?"

"Okay." Terry gasps, reaching for her sister's hand.

X

"Stay with us, darling. Stay with us."

Terry was panting unevenly as they rushed her into the emergency room.

X

Flashes of doctors helping Terry deliver the baby appeared, Terry groaning in pain.

A doctor put on a ventilator over her mouth, and only a few seconds after the baby was delivered, Terry shut her eyes.

But that wasn't before she also saw *Brenner*.

X

When Terry first opened her eyes, she saw *sunflowers*.

Turning her head she saw Becky, who had watery eyes.

"Hey there."

She took a few seconds to really come through before she asked Becky;

"Jane. Where's Jane?"

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

Terry became confused.

Jane couldn't be dead, she heard and saw her cry before she lost conscious.

"No, I saw her."

"No, no, she wasn't breathing."

"She was crying."

"No," Terry says, shaking her head.

"I heard it."

She stops, realizing something.

"He was there."

Brenner.

"Who was there?"

"He took her," Terry exclaimed, angrily, trying to yank the IV off her.

"Don't take it out! Terry! Terry!"

"No! No! Please don't!" Terry yelled as they gave her a shot that would make her sleep.

X

"Three to the right. Four to the left." Terry says to herself, turning the lock to the safe, revealing a gun.

She loads it, sighing.

She was going to get her daughter back.

X

She sighed, getting out of her car to enter the Hawkins Lab.

She followed three women, trying to blend in, when;

"Ma'am, can I see your badge?"

She paused, knowing that she was busted.

She turned, drawing her gun.

"Stay back. Stay back!"

The officer reached for his gun, causing her to draw the trigger, causing screams.

X

The alarm was blaring, Terry checking every room.

"Jane? Jane?"

She looked to see a door with a **rainbow** on it.

She goes towards it and opens the door, revealing a room with a crib on the back side of the room, three little girls playing with the toys.

Terry smiled at the toddler that tilted her head, gazing at her curiously.

The toddler next to her, with long brown hair, bright blue eyes, and very few freckles spread across her cheeks, furrowed her eyebrows.

"Jane..." Terry says, reaching for the toddler when men grabbed her.

"No!"

Jane and the African-American child were hugging the toddler with

the freckles, who was covering her ears from the screams.

The toddler looked at Terry with sad eyes.

"No! No! She's my child! No! She's my child!"

X

They had Terry strapped down, binding her wrists.

"No! No. No!"

She saw Brenner and two adults standing next to him, all with expressionless faces.

"No. No. No." Terry sobbed, as they put a gag in her mouth, getting ready to electrocute her brain.

"Four-fifty."

Terry's screams were muffled as they electrocuted her brain, gripping the metal bar tightly, only to slump when it ended.

"Breathe. They're on their way."

"Stay with us, darling."

"Sunflower."

"Three to the right. Four to the left."

"Rainbow."

"Four-fifty."

"Breathe."

"Sunflower."

"Rainbow."

"Jane...no!"

"Four-fifty."

"Breathe."

"Three to the right. Four to the left."

"Breathe."

"Sunflower. Rainbow."

"Breathe."

"Three to the right. Four to the left."

"Breathe."

"Four-fifty. Sunflower. Rainbow."

X

Jane took off the blindfold, gasping.

As her Mama repeated the words, she reached for her necklace, rubbing the name, trying to steady her breathing as Becky gave her a hug.

She was overwhelmed by what she had seen...

But what was it that her Mama was trying to tell her?

20. Chapter 20

Summary for the Chapter:

They find Hopper and Jess discovers a new power.

"There's nothing."

Jess turned to Mike who was looking out the window of the car.

"There's nothing here."

Jess grabbed his hand, squeezing tightly.

"Are...Are we close?" Joyce asked.

"We're in the vicinity," Bob replies.

"What's that mean, the vicinity?"

"It means we're close. I don't know. It's not precise."

"But we did all that work."

"I told you, the scale ratio is not exactly one-to-one. We needed to take-

"Turn right."

Jess turned to Will, furrowing her eyebrows.

"What?" Joyce asked.

"I saw him."

Jess immediately grabbed onto Will's hand, gasping as she saw what he saw.

"Where?"

"Not here. In my now-memories."

"He's right, Mom. Turn right."

Joyce looked back at the two in shock.

"In your what?"

"Turn right!"

Joyce turns sharply to the right, causing them all scream when they hit a sign.

Jess shrieked as she threw out her hands, stopping the car with her telekinesis, right before they hit what she believed was Hopper's truck.

"Are you okay?" Joyce asked, turning to the three.

Her eyes widened when she saw Jess panting, blood running down her nose as she lowered her arms, wiping her nose.

"Superspy...Superhero." Mike sighed, looking at the two.

Jess let out a small smile before taking Will's hand, looking into his now-memories.

"What's Jim doing here? Joyce?" Bob asks, turning to Joyce.

"Kids I need you to stay here." She says, opening the door.

"No. Mom, Mom, Mom, it's not safe," Will says, looking at Joyce.

"That's why I need you to stay here. Stay here!"

"Like hell, I'm staying here! That's my dad that's down there! I'm going with you!" Jess exclaimed, causing Mike to widen his eyes, grabbing her arm.

"No, Jess! Like Will said, it's too dangerous!"

"Mike, I'll be fine! I'm not leaving you, okay? You won't lose me too, I promise!" Jess says, turning to him, causing him to swallow before letting go of her.

"Promise?"

"I promise! I'll be careful!"

Jess exits the car, running up to Joyce.

"Hopper!"

"DAD!" Jess yelled, looking down the hole.

"Hey, be careful you two."

Jess held hands with Joyce as they walked towards the hole.

"Just going down the hole."

Jess gasped at the vines moving.

"Vines."

When Joyce turned to Bob, Jess lifted her arm towards the vines and concentrated.

"Give me that."

"The shovel?"

"Yes, give me the shovel."

When Joyce got the shovel, she heard screeching sounds and turned to see Jess with a bloody nose, her hand trembling.

She helped her by hitting the shovel at the vines, making it easier to clear an opening.

Jess lowered her arm, wiping her nose as she jumped in before Joyce could stop her.

She gasped at the sight, looking around.

"Holy fucking shit..." she whispered.

Was this the Upside Down?

She heard a soft thud behind her, causing her to turn and see Joyce walk up to her.

"You okay? Are you...drained?"

Jess smiled at her.

"I'm fine. I'm stronger than I was a year ago when I first found out."

Joyce nodded before they both started walking forward.

"Hopper!"

"Dad!"

"Hopper! Hopper!"

"DADDY!" Jess screamed, flinching when she heard a thud.

Joyce turned to see Bob had jumped in.

"Joyce, what is going on? Where are we?"

"Bob, are you okay?"

Jess closed her eyes, remembering what she had seen in Will's now-memories.

"Tunnels. Is this Will's map?"

"Hopper!"

Jess opened her eyes, gasping.

"DADDY!!!" She yelled, running straight through the tunnels.

At every step, vines parted her way, creating a clear path so she wouldn't trip.

She could hear Joyce faintly yelling for her, but she reluctantly ignored her, wanting to save Hopper and get out of there as soon as possible.

"DAD!!!"

She saw two tunnels up ahead and taking her gut instincts, she went for the left tunnel, screaming for Hopper over and over again.

"DADDY!!"

X

Mike and Will looked down the hole, anxiously waiting for them to come back.

"Do you see anything? I mean, in your now-memories?" Mike asked Will, him turning to Mike.

He shook his head, causing Mike to sigh, tapping his foot impatiently.

"Come on, little sis, come back."

They heard tires approaching and they turned to see vans, the vans from the lab, stopping in front of them.

They looked at each other and back at the vans again.

Jess is NOT going to like this.

X

"DADDY!!"

Jess panted, walking to another area, clenching her fist.

She suddenly felt it become warm, causing her to lift it up and open it, gasping at the sight of the flame.

"Holy shit...how many powers do I have?!"

She shook her head, knowing that eventually, she'll remember but for now, she'll use it as an advantage as she can now clearly see what's in front of her.

She gasps at the sight of Hopper's hat, turning and screaming at the sight of his body wrapped up in vines.

"DADDY!!"

She ran over to him, falling to her knees and yanking at the vines, her tears blurring her vision.

"Dad, it's going to be okay!! I'm here!"

She raised her hand, concentrating on the vines around his neck, barely hearing when he rasped out;

"Knife."

"JESSICA HOPPER!"

Jess turned to see Joyce and Bob.

"Mom! There's a knife somewhere here!"

"Knife?"

"It's over there."

Jess continued to concentrate on removing the vines telekinetically, blood running down both her nostrils and her ears now, panting unevenly.

Joyce cut the vines binding his neck, hands while Jess collapsed on her knees, raising both her hands, screaming as she killed the rest of the vines off of Hopper.

He was helped up by Joyce and Bob as Jess shakily got up, weakly wiping her nose.

"Oh, my god. Hopper, are you okay?" Joyce exclaims, placing her hands on his cheeks.

"Joyce."

"Are you okay? Are you okay?"

He turned to see Jess, who was leaning on Bob, blood coating her upper lip, ears, and eyes red-shot, looking like she could collapse...

And suddenly, his fatherly instincts kicked in when he realized what she had done to save him...along with the shock that she also had powers.

"Jessica."

Her head shot up, sobbing as she walked over to him, collapsing into his arms.

"DADDY!! DADDY!!" She sobbed, clutching onto him.

Mildly taken aback at what she called him, he hugged her back, placing a gruff kiss on the top of her head.

Jess sniffed as she relaxed into her father-figure's embrace.

"Hey, Bob."

"Hey, Jim."

Joyce exclaimed when the vines started closing in, Jess whimpered tiredly as she attempted to raise her arm, only for it to collapse, not feeling drained, but close to it.

Bob turned and exclaimed when he saw a man in a Hazmat suit.

"Go! Go! Go! Clear the area!"

The adults pushed Jess in front, wanting her to get out first since she was the child.

The adrenaline started kicking in again as she ran through the tunnels, back at the hole, a man in Hazmat suit helping her up.

She ran through the men, sighing when she saw Will and Mike.

"BOYS!"

They turned and Mike let out a relieved grin, only for it to drop when he saw her face coated with blood.

"Jess!"

She ran into Mike's arms, pulling Will into the hug as well.

"Did you find him?" Mike asked, wiping the blood with his hoodie.

"Yes. The reason why I got out first is because I'm the kid."

Mike was about to say something when Will grunted, falling to the ground.

"Will!" Jess exclaimed, touching him.

She flinched back as soon as she did, pain flaring through her body.

Mike didn't seem to notice as he shook Will.

"Will? Will, are you okay?"

"They're hurting him," Jess whispered.

She tried running back to the hole, only to be stopped by men.

"NO! STOP IT!! THEY'RE HURTING HIM!!" She shrieked, trying to push past them.

"THEY'RE HURTING HIM!! THEY'RE-"

Suddenly, she heard screeching, causing her to turn and see Will on the ground, convulsing.

She immediately ran towards him, but Mike stops her from touching him, causing her to sob and hug him tightly.

"THEY'RE HURTING HIM! THEY'RE HURTING HIM! THEY'RE-"

"-HURTING HER!"

21. Chapter 21

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike and Jess find out more about Jess' past in the lab through a file.

Jessica Hernandez had no problem with letting the lab workers know that she did not trust them...

...And was deathly AFRAID of getting into the vans.

She shrieked and sobbed when they tried to push her in, hyperventilating heavily.

Only when Mike pushed them off her, did a few breathing exercises with her to calm down, and decided to go with her in the van, did she agree to go in.

Because she wasn't going to leave Will alone while he was in pain.

Mike did everything he could to make sure she wouldn't touch Will, not wanting her to feel any sort of pain.

He already had one best friend that was suffering, he didn't want another.

Especially one who always seemed to suffer the worst of the worst.

Eventually, the vans stopped, doors opening and getting the stretcher Will was in out, Jess and Mike following not too far behind.

"Get him out! Go! Go!"

Will was screaming in pain, and Jess was sobbing as Mike held her closely as they followed behind.

"God! Hold on, sweetie!" Joyce cried, running with the doctors and nurses pushing the stretcher.

Will was sobbing, feeling so much pain and was burning up.

"I'm right here. Just hold on."

People were giving Mike and Jess weird looks because when he saw her glancing at certain doors, he pulled her closer to his body, not wanting her to get a panic attack in the middle of the hallway.

He isn't stupid.

He knows she grew up here from when she was three to when she was seven.

Plus, this was El's personal hell for 12 years.

They both have a right to hate this place...but right now Will's more important than some personal vendetta.

They had now stopped at a room, Will crying as the nurses tried to see what was wrong with him.

"Vitals?"

"Heart rate 220. Temperature 106."

Mike had Jess pressed against his chest in an attempt from letting her touch Will to see what was REALLY wrong with him.

And apparently, Bob was doing the same for Joyce as she kept reaching for him.

"Will, where does it hurt?"

"All over." Will cried, his hair sticking to his forehead from the sweat.

Jess felt the temperature in the room decrease by a ton, freezing when she felt that familiar liquid run down her nose.

Mike saw too and he quickly wiped it for her, in a disguise of him wiping her tears.

"She says he feels like he's burning. Check for burns."

They cut the hospital shirt off him, Will screaming in pain.

Jess tiredly made the temperature decrease a bit more, blood still running at her nose, leaning onto Mike who was trying to keep her up.

"I don't see anything."

The doctor looked at Will.

"Where does it hurt the most, Will?"

"EVERYWHERE!! EVERYWHERE!!"

They knocked him out with a sedative, Jess bawling into Mike's chest, him wrapping his arms around her tightly.

When can they EVER catch a break?

X

It had been a couple hours since Will was knocked out, and after Jess had been taken to get disinfected along with Joyce and Bob, she had collapsed asleep in Mike's arms when she came back in the room in hospital clothes and a braid, emotionally and physically tired.

But not before whispering;

"They know...and I'm terrified."

He was too as he wouldn't let ANYONE who was part of the lab go NEAR her or him, cradling her protectively in a blanket on the floor.

He couldn't protect El, but he CAN protect Jess.

A woman came in and walked towards them, Mike giving her a glare that made her stop, tightening his grip on Jess, who made a content sigh in her sleep.

The woman was holding a file and handed it to him.

"I assume Miss. Hernandez would like to know what her powers are and what connection she has to the lab."

Mike hesitantly took the file, giving the woman a confused glance.

She just smiled sympathetically at the Colombian sleeping.

"No child should EVER go through what she and her little friend went through before Owens took over."

And with that, she left.

Mike looked at the file, doing a double take at the file name.

Jessica Vera Hernandez - Subject 012

"What the-"

He takes her left arm, pulling the sleeve where he remembered El showed her *011* tattoo.

Nothing.

He looks closer and he could see faint scars around a certain area that looked like it had been healed a long time ago.

Then it clicked.

"Tattoo removal," he whispered.

It had been a thing since the 1960s, and it only improved the result of removing the tattoo since then...

...But, he had heard it caused immense pain.

More than when first putting it on.

Jess stirred, rubbing her eyes, furrowing her eyebrows together.

"Mike?"

He looked at her, still clutching her protectively.

"Hey, little sis."

She removed herself from his body, but still sat close to him, not wanting to leave his side.

Especially after realizing that they knew.

"What's that?"

Jess gestures to the file in his hand.

"A woman gave this to me...said it had information on you."

Jess frowned, looking at the file name and flinched at the sight of the number.

"Twelve? I was Twelve?"

"Apparently," Mike mumbled, looking at it as well.

"...I guess if I grew up with El, you would have called me 'Ve' then." Jess says, causing a small smile to appear on his lips.

"I wonder how you would be like if you did grow up with El and escaped with her."

Jess frowned, looking down.

"Well...I don't know. I'd still have a sister...whether she lives or dies some other way when she's seven is up to the fact whether I'm worse than El or pretty much the same way."

Mike decides to end the dark thought right there, because he KNOWS what would have happened if Gabby still died if Jess grew up with El, and adding that with what they went through in the lab together before being separated, and her parents' abuse added on top of that...

He shuddered, stopping himself from dwelling on the thought, turning to the Colombian again.

"Do you wanna-"

She nods, laying her head on his shoulder.

He opens the folder, both doing a double take at the first paper that listed all her powers.

"Holy shit Jess...you're even more powerful than El!" Mike whispered,

Jess' jaw dropping as well.

SUBJECT EXPERIMENT 012:

JESSICA VERA HERNANDEZ

**BORN POWERS: AEROKINESIS, GEOKINESIS, FERROKINESIS,
PYROKINESIS, FIRE BREATH, THERMOKINESIS, HYDROKINESIS,
WATER MIMICRY, FREEZE BREATH**

LEARNED POWERS: TELEKINESIS, BIORIDESIS

STARTED EXPERIMENT: AGE 3

ENDED EXPERIMENT: AGE 7

They glanced at each other, everything strange that they couldn't really explain that happened from the day they met to now finally making sense.

"I-I need some air," Jess whispered.

Mike got up with her until she gave him a look.

"Alone."

22. Chapter 22

Summary for the Chapter:

In an attempt to protect Will, Jess ends up revealing her powers in the lab.

Jess had gone outside for a bit, trying to clear her head from the pounding.

She closed her eyes, sighing.

She backed against the wall, biting her lip, the temperature warming up again.

Jesus, does the temperature depend on how she felt?

Then again...it would explain how the past couple months had been cold...even the Summer wasn't as blistering hot as it usually was.

She walked back in the room, noticing how Mike fell asleep with the blanket wrapped around him.

"They made me sign, like, a thousand documents. I mean...we all had to. We had to."

Jess turned to see Joyce talking to Bob, causing her to walk towards her, catching the woman's attention.

"Oh, hey sweetheart."

Jess let on a fake smile.

"Mike told me...are you okay? Has anyone-"

"No...no one has attempted anything. At least...not yet." Jess sighs, refusing to meet Bob's eyes.

Joyce sighed before turning back to Bob, wrapping an arm around Jess.

"I mean, I lost track at a certain point. They're going to make you do the same. I'm sure."

"Yeah. Well, hey, whatever."

Joyce sighed, rubbing Jess' shoulder.

"What kind of documents?"

"Uh, confidentiality, and there were these official forms saying, like, nothing ever happened, which is why..."

Joyce motioned towards Will, Jess sighing sadly as she reached for her necklace, rubbing it.

"Will got lost in the woods," Bob says, realizing it.

"Yeah."

Bob sighs.

"Man, I always thought stuff like this happened in movies and comic books. Certainly not in Hawkins, and certainly not to someone like you...or you." He says, adding the last part towards Jess, causing her to look at him and shrug.

"Or you," Joyce says, looking at him.

"Yeah. Bob Newby, superhero."

He chuckles.

Jess smiled, glancing at Mike who was still sleeping.

She sighed, wondering when will they ever find a normal in their new, crazy life.

"You cold?"

"Uh, just a little jitters, I guess. Hey, don't start worrying about me. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Okay? I'm fine. I'm fine."

Jess leaned on Joyce again, shivering as she made the temperature a bit warmer, wiping the blood when it ran down her nose.

"It's not like you didn't warn me. 'This is not a normal family.' Isn't that what you said?"

"Yeah."

Bob chuckled, looking back at Will and Jess.

"You weren't kidding."

Jess giggled, nodding.

"We're far from ordinary, that's true." She says, shrugging.

But...she wouldn't have it any other way...

She just WISHES that they didn't have to suffer so much.

"It kinda makes my idea of moving to Maine sound a little less crazy, right?"

"Oh, it's...it's not crazy at all."

"Mom?"

Jess turned and gasped when she saw Will up.

"Hey," Joyce says, putting down the mug she had in her hands.

Jess walked over to him as Bob went out the room to call for a doctor.

"Sweetie, how are you feeling? You okay?" Joyce asked, placing a hand on his shoulder.

Jess noticed movement from beside her and she turned to see Mike had woken up.

She reached for his hand, squeezing it.

He glanced at her momentarily before looking back at Will, relieved she was still here and not had been taken away.

"Okay, they're on their way."

Jess turned to see Bob come back in, smiling softly before turning back to Will.

"Who is that?"

Jess' smile dropped, furrowing her eyebrows in confusion.

"What?" Joyce asked.

Jess glanced at Mike, who was giving her a confused look.

"It's me, big guy. It's Bob."

He reached for his hand and Will flinched, drawing it back.

Jess widened her eyes, gasping.

"Who are you?"

"I-It's me! Hermana major, it's me, Gabby!"

She turned to Mike, shaking her head.

"Amnesia." She mouthed, his eyes widening.

"Are you a...doctor?"

"No. No, it's just me. Just...just Bob."

Jess looked empathetically at Bob, because she knew how it felt to be the one who forgot, and how much it hurts the other person to be forgotten how close or what role they played in their lives.

She remembered seeing behind closed doors how much her sister sobbed and cried in their...biological mother's arms, feeling extremely guilty that she couldn't even REMEMBER who she was, and it took a whole YEAR for her to remember her.

Then again, she had been lucky to remember her, because she knows that other people aren't as lucky.

Mike saw that Jess was about to tear up and he wrapped an arm around her, just as upset as she was because, if Will couldn't remember Bob...

...did he even remember them?

X

Owens had come in with a lot of doctors, giving a short nod to Jess, confirming her and Mike's suspicion of him knowing about her when he came in.

When Hopper followed behind, she threw herself onto him, hugging him tightly.

He had hugged back, both separating after a few seconds and standing next to each other.

"Do you know your name?"

"Will."

"Your full name?"

"William Byers."

"Do you know...Do you know who I am?"

"A doctor."

Jess frowned, knowing that he didn't actually remember the man personally.

"Have we met before?"

"I don't remember."

She sighed, that confirming her theory.

"Hmmm. You don't remember me? Okay."

He points at Mike, causing Jess to tense, walking towards him and holding his hand, glaring at Owens.

"How about, uh...How about this guy here?"

Will looks at him.

Mike waves at him, squeezing Jess' hand in worry.

"Know who that is?"

Will hesitates, searching his mind.

"It's all right. Take your time."

After a few more seconds, he answers;

"That's my friend. Mike."

Jess smiled at Mike, relieved that he remembered him.

"And the girl next to him?"

Jess looked at Will again, smiling at him.

She waves at him, in a shy manner.

"She's also my friend. Jess."

She let out a huge grin, sighing in relief, wiping the few tears that managed to escape.

"What about me, kid? You remember me?"

Will turned to Hopper, shaking his head.

Jess frowned, glancing at Hopper to see his face fall, though he hid it pretty well.

"They tell me you helped save me last night. You and Jess. You remember that?"

Will shook his head, but Owens interjected.

"Helped Jess save you how?"

Jess bit her lip, glancing at Mike who nodded but, gave her a look to tell her not to give 'too much' information.

"Will told me where Hopper was in the tunnels and how to get to him. I'm afraid of what could happen if we went blindly." Jess says, leaving out the part where she used her powers to save him from the vines, and the fact she can see what he saw in his now-memories if she touched him.

"And, you used your gifts to save him?"

Shit.

Mike squeezed her hand, giving Owens a glare as she weakly nodded, glancing down at her feet, the temperature dropping immensely.

"Do you remember telling her the directions through the tunnels?"

Will shook his head.

"Do you remember anything about last night? About what happened?"

"I remember they hurt me," Will says, causing Jess to bite her lip, remembering last night.

"THEY'RE HURTING HIM!!"

"You mean the doctors?"

"No, he means the soldiers burning the vines," Jess spoke up, Will glancing at her and nodding, turning to Owens again.

"Yeah. The soldiers."

"The soldiers hurt you?" Owens asks, as if he didn't hear Jess, causing her to roll her eyes.

"They shouldn't have done that. It upset him."

Jess widened her eyes, her jaw dropping.

She shared a glance at Mike, both mouthing to each other;

"The shadow monster."

"You say, 'upset him'. Is that him?"

Jess looks to see Owens hand Will a photo, whose face becomes terrified as he looks to Owens and nods.

"Okay. Okay, I wanna try something. It's gonna seem a little odd at first, but I think it's really gonna help us understand what's going on. Is that okay?"

Jess sends a panicked glance at Mike, definitely NOT trusting this.

Jess turns to see Will nod.

"Okay."

X

Jess glanced warily at the creature they brought in from the tunnels, grabbing her shirt tightly.

"Now, Will, I want you to just let us know if you feel anything. Okay?"

Will nodded, and Owens gave the okay to the lab scientist with the blowtorch, the man turning it on.

Jess audibly gulped, trembling heavily.

The man aimed it at the creature, it screeching softly.

Jess turned to see Will looking terrified.

"Do you feel anything?"

"Little sting."

"It stings? Where?"

"My chest," Will says, clutching it.

Jess furrowed her eyebrows in worry, looking at Owens.

"Call it off."

"Papa Brenner, it's tiring her out too much, stop it."

It falls on deaf ears, as he allows the scientist to continue.

Will groans, and Jess bites her lip, her eyes darting from him to the creature.

"How about now?"

"It...it burns."

"Stop it."

"Please Papa Brenner, stop it!"

Will whimpers in pain.

"It burns."

"Where?"

Will panted, groaning.

"Everywhere!"

"STOP IT!" Jess screamed, her eyes wide and expression horrified.

"PLEASE PAPA BRENNER!! STOP IT!"

"That's enough. That's enough!"

Will screams and Jess snaps, all the while when Hopper yelled out;

"Stop! You heard them! That's enough!"

She swings her head upward and the blowtorch freezes all over, swinging it at the wall.

Everyone freezes, turning to her, her eyes widening as she just

registered what she did...

...In front of the scientists in the very place that kept El for 12 years.

She made no attempt to wipe away the blood when it ran down her nose, looking fearfully at Mike who wrapped his arms around her, glaring at the scientists, daring them to try anything.

"M-May I b-b-b-be excused? P-P-P-P-Please?"

23. Chapter 23

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess and Hopper both contact El...and only one of them gets a reply.

Hopper was in his truck, sending a message in morse code to the cabin, waiting for El to respond...

And it doesn't surprise him that she doesn't, sighing.

He looks outside to see Jess sitting down, her hands covering her face, shaking.

She was crying.

He sighed, pressing on the walkie-talkie.

"Hey, it's, uh...it's me."

He sighed, closing his eyes.

"I know that I've been gone too long, and, uh...It's- I just, I want you to know that it's not about you and it's not about our fight. Okay?"

He paused, looking at the building before his eyes found his way to Jess.

"Something came up, and I will...I will explain it all when I see you. I just...I want you to know that I'm not mad."

Hopper pauses, because he is sure he is about to cry.

"I'm just sorry...About everything."

He squeezed his eyes shut, sighing.

"I...I don't want you to get hurt at all. And I don't want to lose you."

He sighs, sniffling.

"Just make sure you heat up some real food, okay? Not just Eggos. And I want you to eat all the peas, even if they're mushy and gross. And...I will be home soon."

He turns it off, turning to see Jess again, getting out of the truck.

As he walks towards her, he can hear the sniffing and the muffled sobs through her hands that are covering her face.

"Hey, kid."

She looks up, her eyes red and swollen.

"Daddy?"

His chest pangs at the name, sitting down next to her, wrapping an arm around her as she laid her head on his shoulder.

"When were you going to tell me, kid?"

She sighed, sniffling.

"I...I don't know. It was something I learned after everything that happened last year and now...I just learned I have more powers than the ones I share with El. It's just...overwhelming."

Hopper nods, getting that as well.

"Well, if anything...I'm glad you froze that blowtorch because that scientist wasn't going to stop."

Jess nods, smiling at him.

"Me too...though I'm terrified."

Hopper frowns.

"And why is that?"

Jess frowned, sighing before she reached for something besides her.

She hands it to him, it being a folder.

He swears he just freezes at the name of the folder, glancing at Jess.

"Tattoo removal if you're wondering why I don't have a tattoo on my wrist," Jess says, crossing her arms.

He opens the folder, doing a double take on the list of her powers.

"Jesus kid..."

"Yeah...Mike joked that I'm probably more powerful than El but...I don't understand. If I'm more powerful than her, why do they just want her? Wouldn't it be the other way around?"

Hopper sighed, closing it.

"It wouldn't matter Jessica, either way, what they did to you and to Eleven, it wasn't right. Far from it, actually."

Jess nodded, glancing down.

"I suppose you're right, but...still. She deserves to have a normal life."

"You both do."

Jess looked at him, frowning.

"Going back inside?"

She shook her head.

"In a bit."

He nods, placing a gruff kiss on her head, Jess just freezing at the gesture, not really have experienced that sort of love in a LONG time...well...from a FATHER-FIGURE at least, considering she gets a lot of love from the mother-figures in her life.

She sighed, looking at her backpack when Hopper left, the Supercomm sticking out, tears forming in her eyes.

"Hey, El...I'm sorry I haven't called in the past few days...or Mike for that matter."

She paused, the static playing in her ear as it always did.

"Something came up with Will that is just REALLY important right now. We...we think he's...."

She sighed, clicking the Supercomm, saying it through Morse Code;

.--. ---

Possessed

She sighed, hoping that she'll understand why she can't say the word.

"Yeah, he's probably...that."

She let in a shaky sob, covering her mouth.

"I'm SO sorry El...SO sorry Jane ."

She laughed.

"Yeah...that's your real name...I remember Gabby finding out one day...did you know she apparently had telepathy? She heard a Bad Man think it when he was handing Brenner something...at least that's what she told us."

She shook her head, tears still streaming down her cheeks.

"Anyways, the reason I'm apologizing is because...I got found out...and in the FUCKING LAB!!!"

She sobbed, grabbing a fistful of her hair.

"I'M SO SORRY JANE!! I'M SO SORRY!! I FAILED!! I FAILED TO KEEP MY ANGER IN CHECK!! BUT THEY WERE HURTING HIM!!! THEY WERE HURTING WILL AND, IT JUST REMINDED ME HOW THEY HURT YOU!!! AND IN FRONT OF ME!! I FAILED!!!"

She let out a loud sob, her body shuddering with disappointment, anger and...grief.

"Just...come back...please El. Back to the Party. Back to me. Back to Mike. Back to US. Please..."

She paused, expecting no answer when;

"Soon."

Her eyes widened, a shuddering gasp getting caught in her throat.

"El?"

No answer.

She swallowed before breathing in and whimpering very quietly;

"Promise?"

Thirty seconds passed when;

"Promise...love you."

Jess let out a sob, half believing that El FINALLY answered back, after almost a year of separation, and the other half thought her brain was playing games with her.

But...she didn't care anymore.

"I love you too...so much El. Te amo hermana."

Jess pulled out a framed picture, of three girls with hair, bloody noses, and smiles, a few teardrops landing on the glass.

She looked and pulled out the plush lion from there, hugging it tightly, pressing her nose to it, faintly smelling the scent of dried tears, lavender soap, and something that was purely just...El...

The young El anyways...

The one she had loved and cherished before they got separated...

The one that she had danced with, cuddled, decorated her hair before they shaved it off, sang with, cried with, watched Disney movies that her parents let them watch in secret...

The one she had kissed in the lips as a personal experiment of their own.

One that had caused the downfall in the remaining time they had together before being separated from each other.

...Her sister that she shares so much history with.

Who she STILL loves and cherishes...6 years later.

24. Chapter 24

Summary for the Chapter:

Will betrays them.

Jess was wiping tears away from her cheeks as she walked back into the room, not noticing Joyce yelling at the guards to let her through.

"Will."

She looked up to see Mike trying to get Will's attention, causing her to glance at Will, her eyebrows furrowing at his glazed expression.

"Will? Will?"

Will jolts suddenly, clearly being caught off guard when Mike touched him.

Jess walked to Mike, kneeling next to him.

"What's wrong? Are you hurting again?"

Jess glanced at Will's eyes, furrowing her eyebrows.

Had his eyes become a different color?

"Uh...I saw something."

Jess looked at Mike, who looked at her.

"In your now-memories?" Jess asked.

He turned to them, and Jess flinched at the sick look in Will's expression.

"The Shadow Monster...I think I know how to stop him."

Jess leaned to him and smirked.

"Then what're you hesitating for, Will? Tell us how to kill the son of a bitch."

X

Jess stood in between Mike and Will as he looked at all the photos of the tunnels.

"Sam, this is ludicrous."

"Just give him a moment, okay?"

"We don't have time-"

"Why don't you shut the fuck up, *cabrón*?" Jess hissed, glaring at the scientist, the temperature increasing.

"What did you call m-"

"Hey, jackass, why don't you do us all a favor and shut up, okay?" Hopper snaps, sending him a glare before he could finish his sentence.

Will stood up, walking to the end of the table and pointing at a group of photos.

"That's it."

"That's what? What...what's there, Will?"

"I don't know. I just know he doesn't want me to see there. I think it's important."

X

Jess didn't know why, but she was passing the time making flower crowns.

She placed one on top of Mike's head, causing him to look up and smile, looking at her as she grinned back, wiping her bloody nose.

"Jeez kid, you picked the right flowers for me."

She turned to Bob and giggled, the stress leaving momentarily.

"I-I'm sorry."

Jess turned to Will, as did Mike, their grins fading.

They took off their flower crowns as they did so.

"What? What do you mean sweetie?" Joyce asked.

Will turned to her, his breath shuddering.

"He made me do it."

Jess looked at Will, and then grabbed his hand, seeing his now-memories.

Mike glanced down, trying to piece together what he meant.

"What? Who made you do what?"

"I told you. They upset him."

Jess lets go of his hand, backing away, eyes wide with shock.

"They shouldn't have done that. They shouldn't have upset him."

Mike widens his eyes, looking up at Jess, *hoping* she'll deny his suspicions, that it was all a big misunderstanding, that Will would *NEVER*-

And she turns to him, horror in her expression...

And he knew.

"The spy."

She nodded, and he jumps up, grabbing her hand as they ran out the room.

"THE SPY!"

They both run towards the doors, the guards blocking them.

"Whoa, whoa!"

"WE NEED TO GET THROUGH!! IT'S A TRAP!!" Mike yelled, Jess,

trying to push past them, tears forming.

"IT'S A TRAP!! WE NEED TO WARN THEM!! IT'S A TRAP!!"

"PLEASE LET US THROUGH!! BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!" Jess screamed, tears running down.

"WE NEED TO GET THROUGH! IT'S A TRAP! WE NEED TO TELL THEM IT'S A TRAP!!"

"Mike! Jessie!"

"IT'S A TRAP!! IT'S A TRAP!!" Mike yelled.

"GET THEM OUT OF THERE, IT'S A FUCKING TRAP!!" Jess screamed.

"Mike! Jessie! Mike! Jessie! Mike! Jessie! Mike! Jessie! Mike, Jessie, where are you?! Mike! Jessie! Mike! Jessie!"

Jess screamed and sobbed that it was a trap, trying to reach for the door, begging them to let them through, to warn the scientists and Hopper that it was a trap...

...before it was too late.

25. Chapter 25

Summary for the Chapter:

Jane reunites with TWO of her sisters.

Mama?

It's me.

Jane.

I'm home.

...

NO.

Breathe.

Sunflower.

Rainbow.

Four-fifty.

Three to the right...

Breath.

...Four to the left.

Sunflower.

Four-fifty.

Rainbow.

Breathe.

Three to the right. Four to the left.

Breathe.

Four-fifty.

Sunflower.

Rainbow.

X

Jane gasps, taking off the blindfold from her face.

"Breathe. Sunflower. Rainbow. Three to the right. Four to the left."

Jane exhales, looking at her Mama.

"Okay. You okay?"

X

"And it just kept repeating?"

Jane furrowed her eyebrows.

"Repeat?"

"Like a circle? Just showing you the same image over and over?"
Becky explained, trying to make it sound sense.

"She kept showing the girls in the room."

"The rainbow room?"

Jane looked down, recalling seeing a rainbow painted near the doorway, nodding.

"What did the girls look like?"

Jane froze as the memories came to her, the girl with the freckles and blue eyes grinning and hugging a baby girl close to her.

Jessie.

Then the other girl appeared in her memory, playing with her toy, her hair placed into braids.

"Different."

"Different than you?"

Jessie was similar...but...more gifted.

She nodded.

"I think this is why Mama wanted to talk."

"To show you the girls?"

Jane nodded, turning to her Mama before looking back at Becky.

"I think she wants me to find...them."

Not Jessie. I'll only put her in danger. No, the other girl.

X

Becky opened a cabinet of sorts, dropping a folder on the ground.

"When Terry was looking for you, she kept files of other missing kids. Kids she thought were like you."

She tossed another folded on the ground.

"Maybe those girls are in here somewhere..."

Jane frowned, the image of the girl with freckles still dancing in her mind.

Jessie won't be on here. Her mama and papa worked for Papa.

"Here."

Becky hands her a folder, and Jane flips through the newspaper articles and photos.

"Does anyone look familiar?"

Jane keeps flipping through the newspaper articles until she came across one about an Indian girl missing in London.

"Is that one of them?"

Jane looked up and nodded.

X

As static played through the TV, Jane tried to find the girl.

She sighed, pulling down the blindfold.

"Did you find her?"

Jane turned to Becky.

"No."

X

Jane was lying in the mattress in her room, looking at the picture.

She closed her eyes, thinking of the girl with the toy.

When she opened them, she was in the void, and she turned to see a figure next to a fire.

She walked towards the figure, gulping.

"Hello?"

The figure turned and at that moment, Jane gasped, opening her eyes.

She ran out of her room, calling for Becky.

"Becky! Becky, I found her."

She ran into the kitchen to see Becky talking on the phone.

"I just- I didn't know who else to call. He gave me this number, and he came looking for her. I thought maybe he could help me. Yeah,

Jim Hopper, he came here with some woman named Joyce Byers?"

Jane froze, realizing she was calling the police...and by that extension, Hopper knows she was out of the house!

"Well, that's a little hard to explain. Uh...there's another girl, and she's missing, and I think she's in trouble. I just- I didn't know who to call."

Jane looked at the wallet on the kitchen counter and even though everything that was good was telling her *NOT* to do it, she took the bills from the wallet and ran out the house, panting.

She'll just have to find the girl herself.

X

Jane had her eyes closed, seeing where the girl was located and who she was with...

All while she was on a bus.

When it stopped in Chicago, Illinois, she got off, glancing at the city that was Chicago.

She had a huge grin on her face, looking around in awe.

When she passed some cops, she ducked her head down so all they could see was her mop of hair.

She was still mesmerized by the city, awed at how many people were there and how *normal* she actually felt to be around them. It was ama-

A man bumped into her and turned to say;

"Watch it, kid."

"A *knucklehead*."

"*Asshole*."

"Mouthbreather," she says, turning to continue on looking around for the place the girl was.

X

She was walking through an alleyway and she never felt so uncomfortable in her entire life.

"They're all dead."

She glanced to see a man with a crazed look in his eyes.

"They're dead."

He cackled and she started walking faster, clutching onto her necklace and rubbing it.

"They're all dead! They're all dead!"

She started running.

"They're all dead!"

X

She had finally reached the building, opening the door to hear people talking.

"You should do stand-up, Axe. There's a spot a few blocks away."

"Hello?"

The four young adults looked towards her way.

"Well, well...what do we have here?"

A girl scoffs.

"What is she wearing? What are those, overalls?"

They were Jessie's old ones.

"They aren't any cows to milk here, kid. Go on back to the farm now."

"I'm looking for my sister," she says.

A woman looked at her.

"You don't look like Poison Ivy's description of her sister. No blue eyes. No freckles."

Poison Ivy?

"Aw...Shirley Temple lost her sister. So sad."

"I saw her. Here."

She reached into her bag.

"Uh-uh. Hand out of pocket. Slow."

She pulled out the picture, following the big man's orders.

"Give me that shit."

The man with the weird hair took it from her, the woman taking it from him.

"Is that Kali?"

"Kali?" Jane asked.

"How did you find us? Who else knows you're here."

"No one."

"So what then? Poof! You just show up like magic with that picture?"

"Stay calm she's just a kid, like G."

"A kid who could get us all killed."

The man pulls out a knife.

"If I have to ask again Shirley, you'll start losing things. Starting with those pretty little locks of yours. Yeah?"

"Come on Axe, put down the knife."

"How did you find us?"

"I saw her."

"Axe!"

He grabbed Jane, causing her to gasp.

"That's not an answer."

Then, Jane watched as he glanced at his hand, his face going pale.

"Jesus. Jesus Christ!"

He started to exclaim, dancing in a weird way.

"Get off! Shit! Shit!"

"You're a terrible dancer, Axel."

"Very terrible."

Jane turned to see the woman she saw in the void, and next to her was a girl that looked younger than *SHE* was, an unreadable expression on their faces.

They walked down the stairs they were on, holding hands.

"I told you two, stay out of my head."

"Oh, me? That was all Kali, Axel...*puta*." The younger girl says, and Jane furrows her eyebrows at the accent.

It sounds so famil-

"So, we're threatening little girls now, are we?" Kali asks, ignoring his statement.

"She knows about you."

"She had this."

The girl with the crazy hair gave Kali the photo, the younger girl

looking at it and furrowed her eyebrows.

"Where did you get this?" Kali asked.

"Mama."

"Your mother gave this to you?"

"In her dream circle."

"Dream circle. I think she's some schizo or something."

"Says she's looking for her sister."

"Yeah. Like I said, schizo."

As Axel reaches for his knife, Jane made it come to her with her telekinesis.

"Jesus!"

The younger girl widened her eyes, recognition in her eyes, her mouth parting.

Kali, however, looked unfazed.

"I saw you. In the rainbow room."

Kali took it, the younger girl looking at her with an agape mouth.

"What is your name?"

"Jane."

Kali looked at her before taking her hand, the one with the tattoo on her wrist.

As she revealed her tattoo, she pulled down Kali's glove a bit down, revealing the *008* tattoo on her wrist.

Jane looked at her, breath trembling.

Kali looked at her, a hint of happiness flickering in her eyes.

"Sister," Jane whispered.

"Sister."

They hug and Jane lets out a sob, smiling a bit.

"Once."

Jane froze, turning from Kali to the younger girl.

"What?"

The younger girl smiled.

"Once...that's what she used to call you...my older sister that is."

Jane widened her eyes, gasping.

Only one person has EVER called her that.

"You don't remember me...but...my name is-"

"Gabriella Thea Hernandez."

Gabriella froze, her eyes widening.

"H-How-"

"Jessica Vera Hernandez...I-I know her...I know Jessie."

Gabriella gasps, covering her mouth.

Jane let out a small smile.

"Hey, Gabby...*Hola hermana menor.*"

And that's when Gabby ran into Jane's arms, hugging her tight and Jane hugs her back, smiling big.

She felt all three things; the feeling of being safe, loved, and cared for.

And unknown to her, Gabby felt that from her for the first time

in *nearly* a decade.

26. Chapter 26

Summary for the Chapter:

Kali and Gabby each talk to Jane.

"And this memory your mother shared...that is your only memory of us?"

Kali was talking to Jane on the balcony outside, Gabby setting up her room to share with Jane.

"Of you? Yes. Of Jessie and Gabby? No."

The three of them are dancing and laughing, flower crowns on their heads and flower sprouting wherever two pairs of feet touch the ground.

"And how long have you been with this policeman?"

"Three hundred and twenty-seven days."

"And this policeman, he thinks he can work out some sort of deal with these men to set you free?"

"Yes. He says soon."

"He's naïve then. We'll always be monsters to them. Do you understand?"

No. No, El you're not the monster.

Jane nodded, trying to cast out the voice in her head.

"Let me guess. Your policeman, he also stops you from using your gifts?"

Jane nodded.

"He says it isn't safe but...Jessie tells me that she often uses her powers out in plain sight. No one has noticed or has taken her away."

Kali chuckles.

"And her friends, *YOUR* friends, they support it?"

"The one who knows about her, yes."

You should have seen it Eli! Jess made Troy trip down on his face after he called Will a really bad slur! It was hilarious!

"She's lucky then, having friends that support her use of her gifts...what you can do is incredible. It makes you very special, Jane."

"Wait. Do you have a gift?"

"So does Gabby, but we only share my gift...much like you and Jessica. And it's different. We can make people see, or not see, whatever we choose."

"Is that why you made the man with the crazy hair dance?"

Kali chuckled.

"Axel's not so fond of spiders, so..."

"You made him see spiders?"

Kali nodded, smirking at her.

Jane lets a smirk play on her lips as well, kinda finding it funny.

"But it doesn't have to be scary."

Kali opened her palm, revealing a butterfly with changing colors.

"This butterfly, it isn't real. I've just convinced your mind it is."

Jane watched the butterfly, awe clear in her eyes.

"Think of it as a kind of magic."

She reached for it, her hand phasing through.

Kali grabbed it and when she opened her palm again, the butterfly was gone.

Jane looked at her, narrowing her eyes playfully.

"Are you real?"

"Yes, I'm real."

Jane started poking her, grins appearing on their faces and giggles escaping from their throats.

X

Jane smiled at Kali as she handed her a blanket, only it to fade when she noticed the look on Kali's face.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong. I just feel...whole...now. Like...a piece of me was missing, and now it's not. Does that make sense?"

"Yes," Jane says, nodding.

"I think your mother sent you here for a reason. I think she somehow knew that we belong together. I think this is your home."

Jane smiled.

"Home."

"Yes, home."

I just want to say El...welcome home.

Um...I'm happy you're home.

This is your new home.

"Kali?"

They turn to see Gabby, her face clean of the makeup on her face.

"I want to talk to her for a bit."

Kali nodded, getting up and smiling at Jane as she left.

Gabby glanced at Jane, biting her lip, looking sideways.

"Uh...may I sit?"

Jane nodded, smiling at the young Colombian.

Gabby sat next to her, glancing at her.

"How are they? The Party?"

Jane smiled at her worry and understood, knowing she'd been gone for nearly a decade.

"Safe...I think. Will is-"

"Yeah...I know, I just...needed to be sure."

Jane furrowed her eyebrows.

"I uh...I have telepathy, which gives me the ability to read other people's minds...sorry."

Jane shook her head.

"It's okay. You needed to know if they were okay...I remember you have telepathy...and...plant manipulation."

Gabby giggled, nodding.

"The one gift that I share with my sister."

Jane smiled.

"I didn't read your mind about her...or Mikey...are they okay?"

Jane frowned, glancing down.

"Sad...and angry most of the time and...Jessie she uh..."

Jane sniffed, looking sadly at Gabby, who furrowed her eyebrows.

"What? What is it?"

"Her mama and papa they...abused her. Almost killed her."

Gabby's face went pale.

"Huh?"

Jane frowned, sniffing.

"Jessie she said that...it started after...you..."

Gabby frowned, looking down.

"After I 'died', right?"

Jane nodded.

Gabby sniffed, closing her eyes.

"Thanks for telling me the truth...even if it hurts."

"Friends don't lie," Jane says, causing Gabby to laugh.

"Yeah...they don't. The number one rule of the Party."

Jane reached into her pocket and pulled out a photo, showing it to her.

Gabby looked and let out a sob, smiling.

"Jesus...they've grown from the last time I saw them."

Jane smiled when Gabby laid her head on her shoulder, sniffing.

"She didn't mention you to me at first...because I think it still hurt. But, when she did...she couldn't stop smiling."

Gabby smiled, sniffing.

"Does she remember?"

Jane shrugs.

"I...I don't know. All she knows is that she has my gift but...I don't

know if she remembers she has others."

Gabby nodded, turning to Jane.

"Did you ever want to go back?" Jane asks, looking at her.

"I did, many times."

"Why haven't you?"

"Because...I was scared. I was scared that they would have moved on from me...that I wasn't important anymore and..."

Gabby shuts her eyes.

"I would have to return there by myself and I couldn't do that because...I was always with Kali after we escaped. And...I wasn't ready to go on my own...not yet."

Jane placed her hand on top Gabby's shoulder.

"You're not alone. You have your sister and your friends...in here."

She pressed her hand to Gabby's chest, where her heart was.

Gabby smiled sadly.

"Yeah, well...when Kali talked about her feeling whole again? I haven't felt whole in a while...not since the accident. And I'm scared that if I go back and they don't want me then...I'll never be whole again."

Jane frowned, hugging the younger Colombian tightly.

"I don't know...it's hard to explain." Gabby sighs, hugging back.

"...I understand."

27. Chapter 27

Summary for the Chapter:

Jane answers to Jess for the first time, and Gabby and Kali introduce her to the gang...properly.

When Kali came to check on the girls, they both were asleep, hugging each other with smiles on their faces.

She smiled before turning the light off, going back downstairs where the rest of the gang was.

"How's your white hick sister? You tuck her in real tight?" Axel asked.

"Yeah, what about a lullaby? Did you sing her one of those?" Mick asked before Dottie started singing.

"Old MacDonald had a farm."

"Yeah." Mick laughed before everyone joined in.

"E-I-E-I-O!"

"And on his farm he had a cow."

"Where's Poison Ivy?" Funshine asked.

"Sleeping with her...she needs it," Kali answered.

"You know, I've only seen Poison Ivy express emotion when she's talking about her sister and their group of nerds back from Hawkins...until Shirley Temple comes in and tells her that she knows her."

"She does, I can tell...besides, Gabby doesn't like to open up about her life that much so...it's obvious."

She paused before saying;

"She found me with only this."

She placed down the photo of her.

"What's that mean?"

"It means she can find people without moving...with nothing but an image," Kali answered.

"You're telling me Shirley's a human radar detector or some shit?"

"Or some shit, yes."

"Come on. No way."

"We'll find out soon enough. I want to do one. Tomorrow."

"You serious Kal?"

"We're way too hot right now."

"Paranoid." Dottie sings.

"Realistic. You don't kill their men and expect them to look the other way. For crying out loud, you haven't even allowed Gabby to kill one yet because of that! If they find us, they will unleash hell."

"So we give in to fear?"

Mick hesitates.

"She's in pain. She needs this."

"And if she's like Gabby?"

Kali paused, glaring at Mick.

"If she, like her, realizes this life isn't for her and, unlike Gabby, has the actual balls to go back to wherever she came from? What then, Kali?"

Kali looked down before looking up at the group.

"We go out tomorrow."

She leaves, glancing down.

She hopes she isn't like Gabby...she's already lost her connection with her.

X

"Hey, El...I'm sorry I haven't called in the past few days...or Mike for that matter."

Jane walks up to Jessie who looked as if she was very uncomfortable, and as if she was really scared.

"Something came up with Will that is just REALLY important right now. We...we think he's...."

Jessie sighed, clicking the Supercomm, saying it through Morse Code, Jane gasping, covering her mouth.

... - - - - - -

Possessed

"Yeah, he's probably...that."

She let in a shaky sob, covering her mouth, Jane frowning.

"I'm SO sorry El...SO sorry **Jane**."

Jane gasps, as Jessie let out a shaky laugh.

"Yeah...that's your real name...I remember Gabby finding out one day...did you know she apparently had telepathy? She heard a Bad Man think it when he was handing Brenner something...at least that's what she told us."

She shook her head, tears still streaming down her cheeks.

"Anyways, the reason I'm apologizing is because...I got found out...and in the FUCKING LAB!!!"

Jane gasped, covering her mouth as Jessie sobbed, grabbing a fistful of her hair.

"I'M SO SORRY JANE!! I'M SO SORRY!! I FAILED!! I FAILED TO KEEP MY ANGER IN CHECK!! BUT THEY WERE HURTING HIM!!! THEY WERE HURTING WILL AND, IT JUST REMINDED ME HOW THEY HURT YOU!!! AND IN FRONT OF ME!! I FAILED!!!!"

She let out a loud sob, her body shuddering with disappointment, anger and...grief.

Jane dropped her hands, tears running down her cheeks, feeling angry and scared *FOR* Jessie, understanding her want to protect her friend.

"Just...come back...please El. Back to the Party. Back to me. Back to Mike. Back to US. Please..."

Jane lets out a sob before nodding, allowing herself to speak.

"Soon."

Jessie's eyes widened, a shuddering gasp getting caught in her throat.

"El?"

Jane leaned closer to Jessie, her chin wobbling.

Jessie swallowed before breathing in and whimpering very quietly;

"Promise?"

Jane closed her eyes, tears running down before looking at Jessie's eyes.

"Promise...love you."

Jessie let out a sob, smiling a bit and Jane found herself smiling too, glad she can *FINALLY* communicate.

"I love you too...so much El. Te amo hermana."

And Jessie vanishes, causing Jane to cry silently, wiping her tears.

"It's me."

She froze, turning to see the radio where Hopper used to communicate to her.

"I know that I've been gone too long, and, uh..."

She got up and started walking towards it.

"I just want you to know that it's not...it's not because of you. And it's not because of our fight."

She got closer to it.

"Something came up, and uh, I'll explain everything soon. I just, um...I want you to know that I'm not- I'm not mad at you. I...I'm just sorry."

Jane was sure she was going to burst into more tears when someone pulled her out of the void, bringing her into consciousness.

"It's okay. It's only me."

Jane sat up, sighing.

"Bad dream?"

"What time is it?" Jane asks, ignoring her last question.

"It's late. You slept well. Come. It's time you meet Gabby and I's friends. Properly this time."

Don't tell Kali this but...the gang? They're NOT my friends. They're Kali's...ONLY Kali's.

X

As Kali directed Jane where to go, she smiled when Gabby ran up to her, all in makeup.

"Hey, Janey!"

Jane smiled at her before Kali brought them to a room.

"We need more money, Kal. I can't keep eating this garbage."

"Este es Axel," Gabby says, pointing at the man with the crazy hair.

"The spider hater?" Jane asks.

Gabby laughed, grinning at Kali who smirked at her.

"Yes, the spider hater."

"Este es Dottie, nuestra nueva." Gabby continues.

"Like you, she just left home."

"You mean the looney bin," Axel interjects.

"Mick, nuestros ojos, nuestros protector," Gabby says, gesturing to the woman with a piece of paper.

"This is Funshine, our warrior," Kali says, turning to the big man.

"Don't let his size frighten you. Fun's a teddy bear." Gabby says, nodding at Funshine.

"Nice to meet you, Miss Jane."

As Jane took his hand and looked at his wrist, Kali told her;

"If you're looking for a number, you won't find one. Gabby had hers removed a long time ago."

Jane turned to Gabby with wide eyes.

"Thirteen, Jessie was Twelve. But, our parents had them removed once they made you and Jessie forget each other." Gabby explained, shrugging.

Jane turned to Kali.

"They're not like us."

"No, not in that way. But like us, they're outcasts."

"Outcasts?"

"Freaks." Axel elaborates.

"Speak for yourself," Dottie says, turning to him.

"Society left them behind, hurt them, discarded them."

"We were dead, all of us."

Jane turned to Funshine.

"Kali and Gabby saved us. Here. And here." He says, pointing at his head and at his heart.

"Don't get all mushy on us now, Fun," Kali says.

"No, not mushy. True."

"Now we help them," Mick says, causing Gabby to look down.

"In this life, kid, you roll over or you fight back."

"We're all fighters here."

Jane furrowed her eyebrows, glancing at Gabby who looked at her, an unreadable expression on her face.

"Fight who?"

28. Chapter 28

Summary for the Chapter:

Kali and Gabby teaches Jane how to channel her anger to make her become more powerful.

The gang dumped name tags on the table, Gabby chewing on her lip nervously.

"Everyone you see here was in some way responsible for what happened to us."

Jane took a name tag, glancing at it before looking up at Kali.

"You hurt the bad men?"

"No, we just give 'em a pat on the back."

Jane sees the uneasy look on Gabby's face and it dawns on her.

"You *kill* them?"

"They're criminals. We simply make them pay for their crimes." Kali says, glancing at Gabby momentarily, causing Gabby to roll her eyes and scoff.

"That may be true Kali, but some are seeking redemption." She hissed.

Jane glanced down, unable to fully understand this.

"Damn Shirley. What's the matter? You look like you've seen a ghost."

"We can't all be fighters, I guess."

"I'm a fighter." Jane quickly says. "I've killed."

She tilts her head, snapping a bad man's neck.

She glares with Jessie, both of them smushing the bad men's brains.

She looks up to see Gabby looking at her with wide eyes, horror written in her expression.

"These men you killed, did they deserve it?"

Jane simply stared at Kali.

"They hurt me."

She's screaming, men holding her up as they carry her away.

"And they still want to hurt you. To hurt us. We're just making the first move. Come."

Kali motioned for Jane to follow her, Gabby nodding as she followed as well, Jane trailing behind them.

X

"We were just like you once. We kept our anger inside. We tried to hide from it, but then that pain festered." Kali says, as the three of them walked outside.

"Festered?" Jane asked.

Gabby paused and Jane turned to see the dark look that flickered across her face.

"It spread...*se extendió.*"

Jane frowned, as the girls shared a glance at each other before they looked back at Jane.

"Until we finally confronted our pain, in our own ways...and we began to heal," Kali says, Gabby nodding.

Jane saw the smiles they both shared and continued to follow them, as they walked on.

X

They jumped off a ledge, walking where there was a sort of clearing.

"Do you see that train?" Kali asked.

"Yes."

"I want you to draw it to us."

Jane looked at Kali before looking at Gabby who nodded.

She looked at the train and raised her arm, focusing on moving it.

She strained, her hands shaking and trembling as the metal made scratching noises as it moved.

She lets go, panting heavily.

"I can't."

"Last night you told me you lifted a van once."

She glared down at the van, holding tightly onto Mike as she threw her head back, the van flying over them and the rest of their friends.

"Yes but...Jessie helped me."

"And you can do that without her as well. The bad men were trying to take you away again, and that made you angry."

Jane looked down, clenching her fists remembering how scared and terrified she was and how her friends, *ESPECIALLY* Mike and Jessie, were willing to *DIE* to protect her.

She looked at Kali and nodded.

It made her *FURIOUS*.

"Good. So, find that anger, focus on that, not the train, not its weight."

"You got this Janey," Gabby says as Jane lifted her arm up, looking at her and glancing at her head, ready to help her resurface any memories she might need for this.

The way Kali is teaching Jane with channeling her anger was how

she at first used her powers when she started to confront her pain until she found her own way of channeling it.

It helped release most of that anger and remove some weight from her shoulders.

"I want you to find something from your life. Something that angers you."

A girl on a skateboard, riding around Mike and Jessie, both of them smiling as the girl laughs.

Gabby blinked, watching as Jane's face grew angry, and she realized that she felt jealous of the girl, and considering from what she told her yesterday about the '353 days' of calling from both Mike and Jessie, Jane probably felt as if this girl was *stealing* them away from her while she's gone.

"Now channel it," Kali says.

The train moved, and Gabby let out a smile.

They were getting somewhere.

"Dig deeper. Your whole life you've been lied to..."

"Do I have a mother?" "She's not around anymore."

The train kept moving, this time quicker.

"Imprisoned."

She gets thrown in the cell.

"Hey, don't walk away from me! Grow the hell up!"

She screams, everything that was glass breaking.

The train keeps moving forward.

"The bad men took away your *home...*"

A flash of Jessie injured.

The train moved a lot faster, Jane gritting her teeth.

"Your mother..."

Her mother screamed as they shocked her brain.

"Jane!"

Her mother screamed.

"They took *everything* from you."

"JESSIE!"

"They stole your *life*, Jane."

A young Jessie yanked at the bad man's grip, reaching out, sobbing.

"*i*ONCE!!"

Jane screamed, using her strength to pull the train faster until she stopped, collapsing on her knees, panting.

"Yeah!"

She looked up to see the gang cheering for her.

"Yeah, Jane!"

She felt Gabby place her hand on her shoulder, looking up to see that Gabby had tear-tracks on her cheeks, wiping the blood from her nose, but she smiled.

"I'm proud of you, *hermana mayor*."

Jane panted as Gabby hugged her, looking at Kali when she kneeled down to her.

"So how do you feel?"

Jane thought about it.

Everything that made her angry, everything that has haunted her

because she kept it bottled inside...

Suddenly didn't hurt or hurt as much as it did before.

She felt freer and more healed than she ever did in the past.

Not to get her wrong, she's still angry about these events that caused her so much pain...

But...now that she's confronted them...it doesn't hurt that much anymore.

So, she's able to look at Kali and answer with an honest answer.

"Good."

She feels good.

29. Chapter 29

Summary for the Chapter:

Gabby gives Jane a makeover, and the gang raids a supermarket.

Jane was brought into a room with a lot of pictures of people.

"These are the bad men, as you call them. The one's we believe are still alive. Do you know any?"

Jane looked around, looking for a familiar face when she spotted one.

"Him."

She pulls the newspaper article of a man from the wall.

Four-fifty.

"He hurt Mama."

"His name is Ray Caroll. And he did more than hurt your mother." Kali says, glancing at Gabby who tensed, shutting her eyes.

The electricity hitting her body as she hit the floor, crying out in pain.

"The bad men like Ray, they know about us. It's made them hard to track. But, maybe not anymore."

Jane rolled the newspaper article, crumpling it.

X

Gabby watched as Jane searched for Ray, a bandanna wrapped around her eyes and she can't help but remember something similar back at the lab...

Jessie had a radio next to her, eyes closed a smile as Gabby overheard her sisters' conversation through the radio, both talking about what they did that day.

Jane rips apart the article, tossing it to the ground.

She pulls down the bandanna and nods at them.

Dottie pulls out the Chicago Telephone Dictionary, looking for Ray's name.

"Gramercy Apartments. Washington and Bethel. That's gotta be it. Right?"

"'Lilburn.' Where is that?" Kali asked, taking the dictionary.

"About an hour east," Funshine answered.

"We don't even have a new ride," Mick argued.

"So we swap plates," Gabby says, shrugging.

"We have plates, right?" Kali asked, looking at Axel.

"Yeah."

"It's risky," Mick says.

"Where's the fun if there's no risk?"

"We want to give our sister a memorable first day, right?" Kali says, looking at everyone.

"I'm down. I'm looking forward to giving Janey a new makeover." Gabby grinned.

"I'm in. For Miss Jane." Funshine says, agreeing with Kali.

"Yeah, sure. Why not? Mick?" Axel says, looking to the African-American woman.

They all turn to Mick who smirked.

"SCREW IT!"

Gabby cheered and ran to Jane, kissing her cheek before running the other direction.

"I NEED PUNK AS FUCK CLOTHES PROMPTO!!!"

X

Jane sat in a chair as Gabby grinned at Kali who brought in the clothes, noticing how Gabby was jumping up and down to the *Michael Jackson* music she had playing in her stereo, momentarily seeing Jessie for a second with the way she danced to her music.

They laughed and talked as Gabby did her hair and makeup, Gabby slicking back her curly hair into a gelled back look, and putting on black eyeshadow and red powder on her lips.

After Jane changed into her new 'Punk As Fuck' clothes, Gabby turned the chair around for the gang to see, proud of what she accomplished in Jane's new look.

"Bitchin'." She grinned.

Jane smiled at her before replying.

"Bitchin'."

X

As they exited the building, Kali glanced to see that Gabby and Jane were holding hands, grinning at each other, feeling a pang of jealousy that even though it was her that Jane was looking for, she had already gotten closer to Gabby than with her.

Then again, Gabby was the only kid in the gang until Jane came along so, maybe they had that in common.

Gabby kissed Jane's cheek, causing Jane to laugh, oddly feeling safer and more at home around the Colombian than with Kali, wrapping her arm around the younger girl, placing a kiss in her hair-sprayed, curly hair.

X

As the adults pulled off the cover off a van, the two kids of the gang pulled open the door and scrambled in, Kali laughing as she joined

in, enjoying seeing her sisters act all happy.

As Mick drove and smoked her cigarette, the rest of the gang had fun, Gabby laughing and whooping around.

Jane laughed at Gabby as she stuck her tongue out, and making a 'V' shape with her fingers, moving it towards her lips.

Kali shook her head, giggling at the younger Colombian as she placed masks over Jane's face, deciding which one fit her.

Jane danced with Kali, a grin on her face as she stuck her tongue out at Gabby who stuck her tongue out at her, both giggling over the silliness of it.

As soon as Jane found her mask, the three sisters bopped their heads to the music on the stereo, all in their masks.

X

As soon as the car stopped at a gas station, everyone jumped out of the van, Jane grabbing onto Kali and Gabby, looking at the small building.

"What are we doing?"

"Stocking up," Kali says.

"Come on, *hermana major*, let's go!" Gabby grinned, grabbing Jane's hand and running towards the building.

X

As the three sisters entered, Kali turned to the man in the counter.

"Hey, your bathroom is leaking."

Gabby dug her face into Jane's arm to keep from giggling.

"Oh, shit!"

"Yes. Shit."

The three looked at each other and Gabby let the giggles escape.

"Okay, contestants, you have a minute and a half. Let's begin your supermarket sweep!"

Gabby winked at Jane before she ran off to go through the junk food section, filling her backpack with chips and cookies.

Jane went to the freezer section, grabbing a fruit before looking up to see there were Eggos, then furthering to put it down.

She opens the freezer and grabs two boxes of the Eggos.

She's grabbing more when;

"Hey! Put that back, or I'll blow your head off."

She glanced up to see the man with a gun, pointing it at Axel.

"You hear me freak?"

"Put the gun down," Kali says, the gun now being pointed at her.

"Stay back. Stay back."

"Hey, Darrel!"

Jane freezes when Gabby walked in front of Kali, the gun being pointed at her.

"There's nothing to worry about. Your money is insured. We're only stealing from the war criminal billionaires who own this place. You won't even lose a dime." Gabby says, calmly, ignoring Kali trying to push her away from the danger.

Jane walks up, steadily and slowly, ready to attack.

"I said stay back!" the man growls, marching over towards Gabby.

Gabby simply smiled as everyone reacted with angry looks and glares, holding up her hands, pushing Kali away.

"We're on the same side. I promise."

"Stay back, you little *Spic*!"

And Jane snaps, anger boiling at what he called Gabby, storming over and screaming, throwing the man back, her teeth shown in a snarl.

She turns to Gabby who looked at her with wide eyes.

"No one calls my little sister a bad word," she says, unknowingly quoting an 8-year-old Jessie to Gabby.

Gabby grins at her, running to her and kissing her cheek.

"Damn, Shirley!" Axel says, speaking for everyone.

Police sirens are heard.

"Let's go! Go! Go, go, go, go!"

Jane grabs onto Gabby's hand, both running out of the store as Axel holds open the door.

"Mick! We gotta go, Mick!"

They run into the van, Gabby falling on top of Jane, laughing.

"And THAT'S how you raid a supermarket people!"

Jane giggles as everyone gets in, hugging Gabby and placing a kiss on her cheek, Gabby smiling big.

Yeah, that's how.

30. Chapter 30

Summary for the Chapter:

Jane refuses to kill after realizing that Ray has kids.

Mick stops the van as they reached their destination.

"We should case this place, stick to the routine. We have time."

"We also have her. Can you look?" Kali added.

Jane nodded, closing her eyes.

Gabby watched her, tapping her feet on the ground.

El opens her eyes, turning to Kali as blood ran down her nose.

"He's watching television."

"Is he alone?" Mick asked.

"I saw him. No one else."

"Good enough for me," Kali says.

"Me, too."

"Let's do this."

They all put on their masks, Gabby breathing out slowly.

"Keep it running."

"Meet you around back."

They open the doors and Gabby and Jane both come out after Kali, holding hands.

X

Jane glared at the door, unlocking it from the other side.

She makes the TV turn off, Gabby opening the door.

They walk into the apartment, Gabby standing beside Jane as they walk to the living room.

"Hello, Ray."

The man looks up to see them.

"Jesus Christ!"

"Sit down. Please."

The man backs up, Gabby shutting her eyes and reaching for Kali's hand, squeezing it.

"I said sit."

"Just, please...just take what you want."

"Oh, we will," Axel says, looking at him.

"Where's your wallet?" Dottie asks.

"Bedroom. My bedroom. My jeans."

"Come on," Dottie says to Axel.

Kali, Gabby, and Jane walked in front of Ray, Gabby letting go of their hands before shakily removing her mask, her expression guarded and cold.

Kali follows suit and nods at Jane to follow.

"Do you remember us?" Kali asked.

Ray shook his head.

Gabby tilted her head, making Ray see the younger versions of them, the versions heremembered, Jane making the lights flicker.

"What about us? Do you remember us, Ray?"

She sees the fear and realization come across his face and she shuts her eyes, just as Kali attacked him, knocking him out of the chair.

Jane noticed she was feeling uncomfortable and pushed her behind her, Gabby giving a weak smile to her before she turned back to Ray, anger burning at her eyes.

"Please. Please."

"You hurt Mama." Jane hissed, clenching her fists.

She threw her hand to the side, screaming as Ray hit the wall.

She walks towards him, breathing in and out angrily.

"Wait. Please. Listen...I just did what he told me to do."

Gabby scoffs from behind Jane, who simply glared at him.

"He said she was sick."

Kali shook her head.

"You had a choice, Ray. And you chose to follow a man you knew was evil."

Jane reached out, ready to kill him when;

"No, wait! No, wait! Wait! I can help. I can help you find him. I can help you find *them*."

"Find who?"

"Brenner and the Hernandezs!"

Gabby froze, Jane tensing.

"I can take you to him."

"Papa.Is.GONE." Jane whispered angrily.

"No, he is alive. The Hernandezs helped him recover."

"Do not lie to us, Ray," Kali says, noticing the trembling of Gabby's hands.

"I'm not lying! I swear! He trusts me! They *all* do!"

Jane glanced at Gabby who was clenching her fists, small vines wrapping around her hands.

She turns back to Ray, still beyond furious.

He was making her sister upset with the mention of the abusive fuckers she has as parents.

"I'll take you to him."

"If he's alive, Jane will find him. Just as she found you."

Kali turned to Jane.

"Do it, Jane."

Her mother screaming as he turned the machine on.

Jessie screaming for her as he dragged her away, tears running down her cheeks.

Jane growled at the last memory flash, her eyes burning with hatred.

"Do it."

"Wait!"

And Jane chokes him, raising her hand and making him fall to the ground.

"You also hurt Jessie."

Gabby shot her head up in shock at the mention of her older sister, but remained to look down, breathing in shakily as she observed Jane in her furious nature.

Jane dragged him across the floor, mercy far from the table.

"Not too quick. He wasn't so generous with your mother...or our sisters."

Jane watched as his face went red, her eyes darting to the right and her expression softened.

A picture of him and his daughters.

"That may be true Kali, but some are seeking redemption."

She suddenly snaps out of it, shocked at what her anger has done to her, and released her hold on him, allowing him to breathe.

"What's wrong?" Kali asked.

Gabby furrowed her eyebrows, looking at Jane.

"Jane?"

She doesn't respond.

Gabby bit her lip before saying;

"El?"

Jane turns to her before motioning to the picture, Gabby looking and her eyes widened.

"Oh."

"What's wrong?" Kali asked again.

"We got a problem."

Kali turns to Axel.

Dottie comes up.

"Kids in the apartment."

Kali turned to see Gabby smiling at Jane for playing mercy, holding her hand for comfort.

"And if she's like Gabby?"

"Please," Ray begged.

"Did he show your mother and sister mercy? No."

Gabby glared at Kali.

"Please. No. I'm sorry."

"He took them away from you, without hesitation."

"...I got her back, though. And that's really lucky." Jane whispered, Gabby nodding at her.

"We're not going to kill him and leave his two daughters fatherless, no matter what's he done to us," Gabby says, speaking for her and Jane.

"Please don't. Please."

"We gotta go, K. They called the cops."

"We finish this first."

Kali turned to Jane.

"JANE, NOW!"

It falls on deaf ears, Jane not even acknowledging her name.

"Kali!"

"Please, don't...Please. Please."

Gabby suddenly reacted violently, turning to Kali with a shocked expression.

"KALI PRASAD, NO!" she shrieked, reaching for the gun...

...and Kali pushes her to the ground, her roughly hitting her head.

Jane reacted just when Kali did that, eyes widening and when she

heard Ray exclaim and the gun cocking, she went into protective mode, tilting her head, making the gun fly out of Kali's hand, the sound of glass shattering being heard.

Kali looked at Jane with shock when she glared at her, before rushing to Gabby.

"Gabby, are you alright?"

Gabby grabbed onto Jane who placed a kiss on the bruise on her head, glaring at Kali still as she did that.

"Kali, we gotta go!"

X

As Jane and Gabby held hands, running down the stairs, Dottie and Axel were cursing.

"Shit!"

"Go, go, go!"

As they got into the van, and Mick started driving off, Kali turned to Jane.

"If you wanted to show mercy, that is your choice. But don't you ever take away mine. Ever. Do you understand? Do you understand?"

Jane didn't answer, breathing in and out slowly.

"El?"

Jane looked up, and saw Gabby holding onto the seat in front of them.

She got up to her, Kali about follow suit when Gabby says;

"Not you."

Kali freezes as Jane went to Gabby, the younger girl hugging the telekinetic, the older sitting down in the chair and allowing the Colombian to cuddle with her.

Gabby sniffed as tears run down her cheeks, Jane kissing her bruise again.

The Hernandez sisters may have been separated from each other..but they both had abusive figures in their lives, NOW both mentally and physically.

31. Chapter 31

Summary for the Chapter:

Jane decides to go back home.

Jane and Gabby were sitting in her room, cuddling as Jane hugged the flannel she got from Hopper.

"I noticed you don't respond to Jane anymore," Gabby whispered, looking at her.

Jane frowned, glancing down.

"How did you get the nickname 'El'? I just saw Mikey and Jessie calling you that in your memories when you didn't respond."

Jane smiled, tears running down her cheeks, pointing at her head for Gabby to look.

Maybe we can call you El? Short for Eleven.

Gabby widened her eyes, not bothering to wipe her nose.

"Mike gave me 'El'...didn't have to keep it...it was my first choice since escaping."

Gabby smiled, nodding.

"It suits you."

They smile at each other before they heard the door being knocked.

They turned and the smiles disappeared.

It was Kali.

Jane didn't know what to think about Kali right now...

She was her sister, there's no doubt about that but...

She *hurt* Gabby.

"May I sit?"

Jane looked at Gabby who nodded, sniffling.

"Sure."

Kali sat on the bed, looking at them, feeling a pang of jealousy again.

"I was once like you two, you know that? But that's why I'm hard on you, because I see in you my past mistakes."

Gabby scoffed, glaring at Kali.

"Really, Kali?"

"They were kids," Jane says.

"Does that excuse that man's sins? Were we not also children?" Kali asked.

"Maybe it doesn't excuse his sins, but that doesn't mean those kids should suffer the same way we did because you want revenge." Gabby snapped, glaring at her.

Kali looked at her, sighing before turning to Jane.

"I remember the day I came to the rainbow room and you and Jessica were gone...the girl who affectionately called me *Ocho*."

Gabby froze.

Kali never told her anything like this.

"And then Gabby came to the lab, taken from her sister and wanting to escape. So when my gifts were strong enough, I used them to escape. And we ran. We ran as far as we could. And it was there, far away, that I found a place to hide. A family. A home. Just like you and your policeman."

Jane noticed how Gabby started to cry.

"And Gabby found someone special...someone, close to her."

Jane looked down, asking her a question in her mind.

"Like me and Mike?"

Gabby closed her eyes before nodding.

"But they couldn't help us...and Gabby's special person tried to protect us...to protect her...but eventually...we lost them too."

Jane froze, her breath hitching before looking down at Gabby who wiped her tears.

"So, we decided to play the part. To stop hiding. To use our gifts against those who hurt us."

Jane glanced down.

Not Gabby though...she didn't want to hurt anyone...

"You're now faced with the same choice, Jane. Go back into hiding and hope they don't find you. Fight, and face them again."

"Face who?"

"The man who calls himself our father and Gabby's parents."

Gabby tensed.

Jane shook her head.

"You may be right about Gabby's parents but...Papa.Is.DEAD."

"That man tonight disagreed."

Gabby froze, getting up from the chair while Jane turned it.

It was Brenner.

"Kali...please...don't do this," Gabby whispered, grabbing Jane's hand.

"You're not real," Jane says, trying to convince herself of that.

"All this time? And you haven't looked for me? Why?"

Jane squeezed Gabby's hand, who was trying to make the illusion go away.

"Because you thought I was dead? Or because you were afraid of what you might find?"

"Go away," Jane says, steadyng her voice.

Brenner started walking towards them, and Gabby gasped, tugging Jane backward.

"Kali, stop it!"

"You have to confront your pain. You have a wound, Eleven, a terrible wound. And it's festering."

Jane dropped back to the chair, Gabby glaring at Kali.

"Prasad, STOP IT!"

"Do you remember what that means? Festering?"

He kneeled down, Jane letting a whimper escape her lips.

"It means a rot. And it will grow. Spread."

"Get out of my head," Jane whispered, the tears running down.

"And eventually, it will kill you."

"GET OUT OF MY HEAD!!!!!" She screamed, the lights flickering on and off, tears running down her cheeks at full storm.

"KALI THAT'S ENOUGH!" Gabby screamed, Kali, making the illusion disappear.

"My fucking god, what the hell is wrong with you?!" She hissed at the African-American.

Kali ignored her and walked up to Jane, who was crying and rubbing something around her neck.

"This isn't a prison, Jane. You're always free to return to your

policeman. Or stay, and avenge your mother. Let us heal our wounds together."

Kali got up and left, leaving Jane to cry and rub her necklace.

Gabby bit her lip before sighing, glancing up ahead.

Jane sniffled and wiped her tears.

"El? Are you okay?"

She froze, glancing up to see Mike and Jessie kneeling in front of her, looking worried.

Not real.

She bit her lip, taking a shuddering breath before shaking her head.

"No...no, I'm not."

"Can you tell us why?" Jessie asked.

Jane sniffed, glancing up.

"I don't know...I can't really explain it...confusing."

"That's okay...tell us what you do understand," Mike says, Jane, letting more tears run down.

"I miss you both...so much. I wanted to go back home when I got out but...the bad men were there. Wasn't safe."

Jessie smiled at her.

"We miss you too."

Jane reached out to her and let out a shuddering breath when her hand went through.

She lowered her hand.

"What do I do?"

"Well...do you want to stay here?" Mike asked.

Jane bit her lip, glancing at Gabby, who smiled sadly.

"Do you?" She asked.

Jane shook her head.

"Then go back...go back home to Mikey and Jessie."

Jane looked at the two illusions in front of her.

"What about you? Will you come with me?"

Gabby looked down.

"...I'll think about it."

X

Jane was alone as Gabby had gone off to take off her makeup, holding onto the flannel.

She hugged it, closing her eyes.

Maybe we can call you 'El'. Short for Eleven.

Maybe, but you? You're beautiful.

You better run! She's our friend and she's crazy!

No, El, you're not the monster. You saved me and Jess. Do you understand? You saved me.

You both have special places in my heart. You're my sister El.

C-Compromise?

It's something that's kind of in between. It's like halfway happy.

Once we fix it up, it's gonna look nice. Real nice.

This is your new home.

Jane opens her eyes and she's in the void, looking at Hopper who's standing in front of some sort of machinery.

She walks towards him, confused about why he looks so panicked.

"That's where I was. It's a damn graveyard."

She sighs before she freezes, hearing a familiar voice.

"We need to get through! We need to get through!"

She turns and gasps to see not only Mike, but also Jessie running together, hitting something that she couldn't see.

"We need to warn them!! It's a trap!!" Mike yelled.

"Please let us through!! Before it's too late!" Jess screamed, tears running down.

"We need to get through!! It's a trap!! We need to tell them it's a trap!!" Mike yelled, Jane, rushing towards them.

"Mike! Jessie!"

"IT'S A TRAP!! IT'S A TRAP!!" Mike yelled.

"GET THEM OUT OF THERE, IT'S A FUCKING TRAP!!" Jess screamed.

Jane ran towards them, trying to hug them, to tell them that everything was alright, that she was listening-

And they vanished once she touched them, sending her into hysterics.

"Mike! Jessie!"

"Mike! Jessie! Mike! Jessie! Mike! Jessie!" She screamed, tears starting to run down.

"Mike, Jessie, where are you?!"

"Mike! Jessie! Mike! Jessie!"

She hears thudding, causing her to freeze, turning around in fear.

And at that moment, she gets pulled out of the void, Gabby looking panicked.

"We gotta go."

They both ran out of the room, Kali rushing in and pushing them in front, all running as they heard the door bang open, cops yelling.

"Don't move!" an officer yells as they run up the stairs.

"The hell's going on?" Axel asks as they run to the third level.

"They found us!"

"Jesus! Jesus Christ!" Axel exclaims, loading his gun.

"No, no, no!" Kali exclaims, putting it down.

Gabby shushed them, grabbing onto Jane's hand.

As the police officers moved around the level, Gabby and Jane moved so they wouldn't bump into them, praying that they wouldn't hear the pounding of their heartbeats.

When they left, Kali motioned them to move, causing them to run down the stairs, and out the building.

"Let's go! Now!"

"Jane, Gabby, come on!"

They both run to the back of the van, gripping tightly onto each other's hands, Jane flinching at the sound of the bullets ricochetting.

"Do something Kal and Gabby! Do something!"

Gabby looked at Kali and nodded, closing her eyes and closing her hand into a fist.

They open their eyes and the bullets stop.

Everyone got into the van...

Everyone but Jane...

She glanced at Gabby and shook her head and Gabby gave a sad smile, nodding.

"Jane, get in," Kali says.

Jane just glanced at her.

It's a damn graveyard.

Mike! Jessie!

IT'S A TRAP! IT'S A TRAP!

GET THEM OUT OF THERE, IT'S A FUCKING TRAP!!

She shook her head.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry, but I have to go back."

Kali froze, not believing it.

If she, like her, realizes this life isn't for her and, unlike Gabby, has the actual balls to go back to wherever she came from? What then, Kali?

"My friends...my friends are in danger."

"This isn't time for a talk. We got to go right now!" Axel says, trying to get their attention.

"Your mother sent you here for a reason, remember?"

"I saw wrong...she kept showing me **Jessie**," Jane says, realizing that now.

Kali was getting desperate.

"It doesn't matter! We belong together. There's nothing for you back there. They cannot save you, Jane."

Jane frowns, knowing Kali was wrong.

But...she wasn't going to correct her on that.

"No."

Her walking towards them in the cliff, glaring down the bullies that almost killed Jessie and Mike.

"But I can save them."

She's engulfed in a hug with Dustin, Mike, and Jessie...her first friends that cared about her.

She glanced at Gabby and gave a pained smile.

"Come back home with me...Jessie will be really happy to see you."

Gabby smiled painfully.

"Someday...I promise."

Jane nods at her, believing that promise and turns to run the other way.

"Jane. Jane! Jane! Jane!"

She sobs as she runs, believing that Gabby will soon get out of this toxic environment, closing her eyes as she shut that name out.

She wasn't Jane...at least not to her.

No, she was *El*.

X

El was looking out the window of the bus, waiting for the bus to get to Hawkins.

"You alright, sweetie?"

She turns to see an elderly woman sitting in the seats across from her.

"You were looking a little forlorn there. You mind if I join you?"

El shrugs, not seeing the harm in it.

The elderly woman looks at her with concern in her expression.

El didn't blame her...she WAS all alone.

"You are awfully young to be traveling alone, aren't you?"

El glanced down, rubbing the charms on her bracelet.

"Well, you are quite the chatterbox. So, where you headed? To your parents, I hope?"

El turns to the woman.

"I'm going to my friends."

She turns to look out front.

I just want to say El...welcome home.

Um...I'm happy you're home.

This is your new home.

She smiled.

"I'm going home."

32. Chapter 32

Summary for the Chapter:

Everyone hides from the Demogorgon dogs in a security room...forgetting about one particular Colombian girl in the process until it's too late to get her without risking anyone's life.

The alarms start blaring, Jess freezing and looking up.

"No...NO!" She screamed, clutching at her head.

"What the hell?" Bob mutters.

"We're too late," Mike says.

"What?"

"WE'RE TOO LATE!" Mike yelled, grabbing onto Jess and running to the room again.

Jess was hyperventilating, tears forming in her eyes.

She was scratching at her arms, pacing.

"What's going on?"

"We're under attack."

Mike turns to Jess and widens his eyes.

"Jess! Stop!"

He rushes to her and grabs her hands, her shaking her head.

"Mike, it's happening again, it's happening again, I DON'T WANT IT TO HAPPEN AGAIN!!" She cries, looking at him.

"I know, I know but, we'll get out of it, I promise."

He turns and grabs the syringe, turning to Joyce.

"We need to make Will sleep."

"What?"

"He's a spy! If he knows where we are, so does the shadow monster!" Jess exclaimed.

"She's lying!"

"He killed those soldiers! He'll kill us, too!" Mike added.

"They're lying! They're lying! They're lying! They're lying! They're lying!"

Gunshots are being heard, Jess shrieking, the lights flickering on and off.

Mike grabbed her hand, rubbing it to calm her down.

"Those are gunshots!" Bob exclaimed.

"They're lying! They're lying!"

"Okay, Will, Will, listen, listen. Do you know who I am?"

Will stops screaming, looking at her.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Y-You're...You're...You're Mom."

Joyce hesitated before turning to Jess.

"Hold him down."

Jess glared at Will, tears running down as Will hits down on the bed.

"No! No! Let go! No! No! Let me go! Let go! No, let me go!"

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!"

"Let me go! Let me go! Let me go!"

Mike had his hand placed over his ears, watching in shock as his best friend screamed at his sister-like-figure to let him go as Joyce got ready to inject the sedative in his arm.

"No! Let go! Let me go! Let me go!"

Will started to pant, and Jess released her hold, wiping her tears and sighing.

The door opens to reveal Hopper and Owens, Jess looking up from wiping her nose.

They turned to see that the door was being destroyed and Jess gasped, covering her mouth in horror.

"We gotta go. We gotta go."

Hopper picked up Will and they ran across the hallways, Jess running beside Hopper.

She freezes when a demogorgon dog attacked a worker, everyone turning around and freezing when they saw an officer shooting.

Without thinking, she ran towards the demogorron dog and flung it at the wall, killing it.

She sighed before flinching when the demogorgon dogs from the other side came towards her.

What's worse is that she got separated from the group.

"FUCK!" She shrieked, running in the opposite direction.

X

Mike sighed when Owens closed the door, relieved that they were safe...for now.

"Oh, my god."

Mike turns to the cameras and freezes when he saw bodies on the floors, the dogs roaming around.

He turns to see Jess' reaction only to see that she wasn't there.

"Wait...where's Jess?" he asked.

Hopper looks up at the question.

"She isn't here?"

"There!" Joyce exclaims, pointing at a screen, Mike running towards it, freezing when she saw her backing up with the dogs cornering her.

"No...NO! JESSICA!!"

The lights start to flicker, the power and electricity going off.

But not before everyone witnessed Jess get attacked by the shoulder before the screens go off.

"Oh, my god!"

Mike took shuddering breaths, tears forming in his eyes.

No, he couldn't lose Jess.

He already lost El, he *CAN'T* lose Jess!

X

Jess screamed out in the pain, flinging all the demodogs (shorter version of what she had been calling them) to the walls, satisfied when she heard the crunching of their bones, only to whimper at the pain of her shoulder.

Scars by an other-worldly creature.

Add that to her collection of scars in her body.

She closed her eyes, the lights flickering at the rhythm of each step.

She had to be quiet, as to not get any more attention.

X

"Look, this is us, and this is the nearest exit. But even if we somehow make it there, there's no way out." Owens was saying, showing a map of the lab.

"What do you mean?"

"The locks are fail secure."

"Fail secure?" Joyce asks.

"If there's a power outage, the building goes on lockdown."

"Can it be unlocked remotely?" Bob asked.

"With a computer, sure, but somebody's gotta reset the breakers."

"Where are the breakers?" Hopper asked.

"Breakers are in the basement, three floors down."

Hopper turned to leave.

"Hey, where are you going?" Bob asked.

"To reset the breakers."

"Okay, then what?"

"Then we find Jessica and get the hell out of here."

"No, then the power comes back on. If you wanna unlock the doors, you have to completely reboot the computer system, and then override the security codes with a manual input."

"Fine, how do I do that?"

"You can't! Not unless you know BASIC."

"I don't know what that means."

"It's a computer programming language."

The adults turn to look at Mike, who had refused to talk since they saw the Colombian get attacked, him playing with something around his wrist.

"Alright, teach it to me," Hopper says to Bob.

Bob scoffs.

"Shall I teach you French while I'm at it, Jim? How about a little German?"

He turned to Owens.

"How about you, Doc? You speak BASIC?"

"...No."

Bob scoffs before nodding.

"Okay, I got this."

He turns to Hopper.

"I got this."

"No, Bob."

Joyce walked over to him and hugged him.

"It's okay."

Mike normally would roll his eyes at the sight of adults showing affection to one another but...all he could think about was Jess being attacked, and not knowing if she was alive or not...

And it kicks him the gut that it's the same way with El...him not knowing if she's alive or not.

The next thing he knows, the door opens and Bob and Hopper are gone.

X

Jess is walking through the halls, blood coating her hand as she gripped onto the injured shoulder, pretty sure that it's dislocated.

She sees a dead man on the floor and notices the earbud in his ear connecting the walkie he has, and suddenly she gasps, kneeling down and reaching for his gun and the walkie, knowing that if the others had some sort of radio or walkie they can communicate.

She puts the earbud on and turns on the walkie.

"Hello? This is Jessica Hernandez and I'm alive. Can anyone hear me?"

33. Chapter 33

Summary for the Chapter:

Jessica almost encounters Death...again.

Mike was biting his nails, pacing up and down.

Hopper had returned to the room while Bob went to reset the breakers and the turn on the power.

"Hello?"

Everyone flinched at the voice, Mike widening his eyes.

Was that-

"This is Jessica Hernandez, and I'm alive."

Mike lunged for the microphone, crying out in relief.

"Can anyone hear me?"

"Jessica!" he practically yelled, Hopper shushing him to keep it quiet, though he's also relieved that she's alive.

Everyone hears the sigh and laugh of relief, mixed with some groaning.

"Oh, thank god!"

Mike hears her sniffle and he knows her long enough to know she's crying.

"Jessica, are you okay? Are you hurt?"

"Well...I'm pretty sure my shoulder's dislocated from that bite, and I'm losing quite a lot of blood...but you should have seen the other guy...and by guy I mean the demogorgon dogs."

She's injured and she's *STILL* cracking a joke...not that anyone's laughing.

"Just...hang on, okay? We're going to get out as soon as Bob turns the power back on."

"Okay...okay. I can do that."

Mike sniffled, wiping the tears that he didn't know was running.

"You're a survivor, Jess, alright? Make sure you live up to that name."

X

"Don't worry, Mike," she whispered moving across the hallways, careful not to trip.

"I promise I will."

"Good."

She turns off the walkie, freezing when she saw a demodog, moving back and hiding behind the wall.

"Shit!"

She breathed in and out steadily, looking up when she saw the lights go back on.

She let out a relieved smile, glad she didn't have to rely on the flickering to see now.

X

Mike looked up when the light turned back on, looking at the cameras where Bob was.

"He made it."

He glanced at all the cameras and stopped where he saw Jess hiding, her chest rising and falling steadily before storming to the other side, and the demogorgon dogs' shrieks of pain when it hit the wall being heard through the speaker.

Mike let out a shaky gasp when he saw her gripping onto her shoulder, the blood staining her hand and her shirt.

"Jesus Christ, that doesn't look good," Owens remarked as she leaned on the wall, sighing out and wiping her nose as the blood ran down her nose.

"Please be careful," Mike whispered.

X

Jess was walking down the hallways, letting in shaky breathes, when she heard roaring.

Feeling too tired to fight them, she ran into the room next to her, tripping on her feet as she closed the door, backing up.

She took steady breaths, swallowing nervously.

X

Mike, Hopper (who was carrying Will), and Joyce had made it to the doors, but Mike glanced out from the closed doors, waiting for Jess to come.

"Come on Jess."

X

She hears the door open and flinched when she sees Bob come in, closing the door hurriedly.

"Bob?"

He turns to her and shushes her, both of them looking at the door, Jess freezing as she saw the Demodog's shadow.

She covers her mouth to muffle the whimper of fear, her heart hammering hard as she watched the shadow leave.

"How you holding up there, Bob? You alright?"

Bob clicks on the walkie.

"Yeah. Yeah. Jessica's with me right now."

"Okay, good. You found her. You both got a pretty clear shot to the front door."

He nods.

"Okay."

"You two can do this, okay? You're almost home free, alright, Bob?"

He nods and turns to Jess, helping her up and opening the door, Jess stepping out first and Bob following after, Jess freezing when she heard the thud of a broom falling to the ground.

They both turn to see the demodogs turn to them, Jess letting out a whimper.

"RUN!"

They both ran the opposite direction, the lights flickering madly at Jess' panicked and scared state, the adrenaline hitting them both as they heard the roaring of the demodogs behind them.

She *WISHED* she wasn't so drained so she could kill them and make their escape easier...but apparently...fate just seemed to hate Jessica Hernandez, as it reminded her on a daily basis.

Bob swung open the doors, their screams and Jess' crying echoing in the hallways.

Bob opened the last door, allowing her to exit first and him following her and slamming the door closed.

She let out a shaky sob as she squeezed her shoulder.

"Bob! Jessica!"

They both turn to see Joyce and Jess let out a sob.

"Mom-"

And suddenly, she falls onto the ground, a demodog attacking her and scratching her with its talons.

She screamed out in pain, as the demodog bites at her shoulder, tears running down as the lights flickered madly, the temperature dropping to freezing in the lab AND outside...

...which is what caused two figures to enter the building, from hearing both Joyce's AND her screams.

"JESSICA!!"

She screamed, *REFUSING* to die right now, to leave her friends when they *NEEDED* her...

...And flung the demodog off her, using the last bit of her remaining power.

Her vision was fuzzy, her ears were ringing, but, she *COULD* feel someone wrapping their arms around hers, dragging her away.

She blinks, still crying from the pain and she sees Mike, tears running down his cheeks, holding her close.

"M-M-Mike?" She croaked, feeling as if she was dying.

She probably was.

"Don't you *DARE* close your eyes or go to sleep, you hear me?! Stay with me, Jess!"

Then, she was being picked up by Hopper, all of them running to Jonathan's car, hearing Nancy's shriek of horror and Jonathan cursing.

She's moved again to Hopper's truck, to Mike's anger and frustration.

"SHE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH FUCKING TIME!! IF YOU WANT HER TO LIVE, THEN FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS!"

He puts her in the back, where she's trying to keep her eyes open, the sobbing not stopping.

She hears more crying, shrieks, and cursing, being brought into someone's arms, while another person held her hands, voices mixing

together telling her to 'hold on' and, 'not to close her eyes'.

So that's what she does.

She holds on and *REFUSES* to close her eyes.

34. Chapter 34

Summary for the Chapter:

Jessica looks at Death in the eyes and defeats him...again.

"SHIT! GET HER OUT!"

"Stay with us, Jess! Stay with us!"

Everyone was panicking as Jonathan swung open the door, turning the lights on and clearing the dining table, Nancy comforting a sobbing Mike whose clothes were partially stained with Jess' blood.

He couldn't get the image of her getting clawed and bitten by the demodogs out of his head, it reminding him from the last time he saw her bleeding nearly to her death.

X

Steve had yelled at all the kids to keep their distance from Jess, him holding the sobbing, bleeding girl as Hopper searched through his truck for the first aid kit.

"Steve...Steve."

He looks down at the girl, rushing her inside and laying her on the table.

"The boys...another room...only Max stays. Don't w-w-want them...c-c-crowding me."

How Steve understood her through her blubbering and sobbing no one knows, but he understood.

"Okay, I'll make sure they stay away."

Nancy had rushed towards her, making her sit up, grabbing onto her shoulder, looking at Jess.

"I'm going to relocate it, alright?"

Jess nods, sobbing as Nancy counted to three and-

POP!

Jess lets out a shriek of pain, the lights flickering and glass flying everywhere.

"HOLY SHIT!!"

Nancy flinched when she realized a glass shard had stuck to Jess' shoulder, cursing.

She hears the boys cursing and yelling when Steve pushes them but not Max to a separate room, yelling that they knew Jess since they were in elementary and deserved to be by her side.

Max ran up to the girl, trying to calm her nerves that the brunette was quite *literally* bleeding to death.

She watched as Nancy, Jonathan, Hopper, and Joyce surrounded her, first aid kit in hand.

Joyce shakily pulled the glass from her shoulder and Jess let out a whimper, the lights still flickering madly.

Max grabs onto Jess' hand, wincing as her hand was squeezed as the adults tended to her wounds, all yelling out what to do to stop the bleeding.

Jess passed out thirty minutes into the procedure, but they had finally stopped the bleeding, wrapping her in bandage wrap, glass, books, and drawings all over the floor from Jess' telepathic breakdown.

"Is she...?" Max finally asked, looking at Hopper.

"Nah, just passed out. Look,"

Max looks and noticed Jess' chest rise and fall.

"She's still kicking it. She's a survivor, like Wheeler says."

Max frowned.

"I noticed she has scars that looked healed...did she go through this when they first fought the Demogorgon?"

Nancy looked at her, shocked that she knew.

"Lucas told me." Max quickly explained.

"...No. Her old scars aren't by the Demogorgon...no they were placed by *human* monsters."

The way the eldest Wheeler bit out who caused them made Max realize that it was someone personal.

"No wonder Dustin talks about her with such adoration...she's such a badass. Even without the powers." Max whispered.

"Finished," Joyce whispered, placing the last wrap on her leg.

She walks to Jess' forehead and places a kiss.

Hopper sighed, rubbing his eyes.

"This kid is the glue of their little group...you should have seen the way Henderson and Sinclair were holding onto her when we were driving there."

"And how Mike sobbed and cried for her when you took her to your truck. He was afraid that Jessica had left us when you did that."

Max felt uncomfortable during the discussion because she didn't know exactly how to feel.

She didn't know the girl well enough to cry out of fear that she would die (though that fear *WAS* present), but, she did feel for the boys who were screaming and cursing at Steve for shooing all but her out the room.

"She said she wants you there to help her through it...probably because

you won't sob or go crying on her and make her overwhelmed."

Max agreed because, she would feel scared too if she was in her position but...she also didn't want anyone crying over her either.

"Daddy?"

She looks up to see Jess peeking out at Hopper, looking emotionally and physically exhausted.

"Hey kiddo, you did good."

She sits up and he placed a hand on her cheek, placing a kiss on her head.

She lets out a sob, closing her eyes.

"I-I thought I broke m-m-my promise...t-that I-"

"Nah, you're right here, still alive. Still the most stubborn kid for defeating death *twice*."

Jess lets out a shaky laugh before turning to Max.

"Thanks for staying with me Max...sorry for placing that burden on you."

Max shrugged.

"It's fine. I'm glad you're alive."

Jess smiles before reaching out to her and getting off the table.

"Woah, hey. Let's get you some fresh clothes and *THEN*, we'll see the boys. I'm pretty sure they're worried sick."

X

The boys were either pacing, biting their nails, or sitting down with their head in their hands.

They were begging Steve to let them go to Jess, her screams and the lights flickering madly making them worried sick.

But...they haven't heard any screams and they're anxious to know if it was good news or...bad news.

The door opens and the boys looked up and let out cries of relief and barreled towards the girls, Jess in fresh clothes and bandages, Max stepping to the side as the boys hugged Jess, sobs and 'You're alive!' being shared, Dustin taking her face and kissing her, not caring that the others were there to witness it, and neither did Jess as she cupped his face, sobbing out in relief.

She hugged all the boys, sniffling.

"I promised you, didn't I? I don't break my promises."

Max smiled at the sight of the group, noticing how the adults and teenagers smiled at the hug pile on the floor, not knowing they were remembering the last time the last time the group had a hug like this...

...Not knowing that the last time they hugged like this was when Jess woke up from her temporary coma in the hospital after her parents almost killed her.

But for Jess, that was far from her thoughts as she just hugged her boys, happy to know that she had stuck to her promise.

She wasn't dying anytime soon.

35. Chapter 35

Summary for the Chapter:

The gang forms a plan to get Will to communicate with them.

Jess was sitting down, laying her head on top of Mike's shoulder, squeezing his hand.

They were watching Hopper talk on the phone.

"Sam Owens. Dr. Sam Owens."

She could tell that he was frustrated right now.

"I don't know how many people are there! I don't know how many people are left alive!"

She glanced up at Mike, worry visible in her glance as he glanced down, also showing worry in his eyes as well.

"I AM THE POLICE! CHIEF JIM HOPPER!"

Jess rolled her eyes, knowing what the person on the other line must have asked.

"Yes, the number that I gave you, yes. 6767- I will be here."

He hangs up.

"They didn't believe you, did they?" Dustin asked, Jess, turning to him.

"We'll see," Hopper says, turning to them.

"'We'll see'? We can't just sit here while those things are loose!" Mike exclaimed, squeezing Jess' hand tightly.

"We stay here, and we wait for help."

Mike sighed, glaring at Hopper before he heard the soft snores

coming from Jess, glancing at her before placing a kiss on her head.

"Hopper was right...she's a fighter," Max whispered, causing the boys to look at her.

"What happened back there?" Dustin asked, glancing at the brunette momentarily.

"Well...I'm pretty sure you guys know of the lights flickering...but, books were flying everywhere, glass shards as well...she got a shard stuck in her shoulder actually because of that..."

The boys flinched, glancing at their Scholar.

"And yet...she refused to shut her eyes...at least not until she passed out thirty minutes in."

Lucas chuckled, shaking his head.

"She's always been stubborn, she defeated death *three times* already."

"Three? But, the chief-"

"The chief wasn't around for the first time she defeated death." Mike snapped glaring at her.

"It was three."

Max blinked, before shrugging.

"Oh well, she's still a badass."

X

A few minutes have passed and they heard nothing from the backup Hopper called.

Mike stared at the phone, waiting for it to ring.

Jess has her head laid on the table on top of her arms, not noticing that Mike had gotten up until he spoke.

"Did you guys know that Bob was the original founder of Hawkins

AV?"

Jess looked up and nodded.

"Really?" Lucas asked.

"Yeah, he petitioned the school to start it and everything," Jess says, Mike nodding.

"Then he had a fundraiser for equipment," Mike added.

The boys smiled.

"Mr. Clarke learned everything from him." Mike continued, walking towards them again.

"Pretty awesome, right?"

"Yeah." Dustin, Lucas, and Jess say, smiling at each other.

Mike placed the toy he picked up on the table.

"We can't let him die in vain."

"Well, what do you want to do, Mike? Alright, the Chief's right on this. We can't stop those Demodogs on our own."

Jess looked up, her eyes widening.

"You call them that, too?"

Dustin glanced at her and they both grinned at each other, cheeks reddening.

"Demodogs?" Max asked.

They both turned to Max.

"Demogorgon dogs. Demodogs. It's like a compound." Dustin explained.

"It's like a play on words-"

"Okay."

Dustin sighed, looking down.

"I mean, when it was just Dart, maybe..."

"But there's an army now," Lucas says.

"Precisely."

"His army," Mike says, realizing something.

"What do you mean?" Steve asked, Jess, flinching at him suddenly making himself known.

"His army," Mike repeats, looking at everyone.

"Maybe if we stop him, we can stop his army, too."

Jess widened her eyes, looking at everyone.

X

They followed Mike into Will's room, Jess holding onto Dustin for balance.

Mike hands Dustin the drawing of the shadow monster.

"The shadow monster," Dustin says.

"It got Will that day on the field. The doctor said it was like a virus, it infected him."

"And so this virus, it's connected to the tunnels?" Max asked, looking at Mike.

"To the tunnels, monsters, the Upside Down, everything."

"Whoa. Slow down. Slow down." Steve says, barely catching up.

"Okay, so, the shadow monster's inside everything. And if the vines feel something like pain, then so does Will." Mike explained.

"And so does Dart," Lucas added.

"Yeah. Like what Mr. Clarke taught us. The hive mind."

"Hive mind?" Steve asked.

"A collective consciousness," Jess explained.

"It's a super-organism," Dustin added.

"And this is the thing that controls everything. It's the brain."

Jess and Dustin realized something.

"Like the Mind Flayer." They both exclaim.

Mike looked at them, realization clear on his face.

Lucas snaps his fingers at them, agreeing with them.

"The what?" Max asked.

"What?" Steve asks.

X

Dustin slams the book on the table, opening it where the Mind Flayer section was.

"The Mind Flayer," Dustin says, everyone now present...excluding Joyce.

"What the hell is that?" Hopper asks.

"It's a monster from an unknown dimension. It's so ancient that it doesn't even know its true home. Okay, it enslaves races of other dimensions by taking over their brains using its highly developed psionic powers." Jess explains, unknowingly cutting Dustin off, who grins as she explains it.

"Couldn't have said it better myself," he says, causing her to smile at him.

"Oh, my God, none of this is real. This is a kids' game." Hopper says, mildly annoyed by the twos flirting.

"No, it's a manual. And it's not for kids. And unless you know something that we don't, this is the best metaphor-"

"Analogy." Lucas corrects Dustin, causing the couple to look at him in shock.

"Are you fucking kidding me, Lucas?" Jess questioned.

"Analogy? That's what you're worried about?" Dustin exclaims, staring at him in disbelief.

Lucas shrugged.

"Fine. An analogy for understanding whatever the hell this is." Dustin says, finishing his thought.

"Okay, so this Mind Flamer thing-" Nancy says, trying to understand it.

"Flayer. Mind Flayer." Jess corrects.

Nancy sighs.

"What does it want?"

"To conquer us, basically," Dustin says, Jess nodding.

"It believes it's the master race," Jess says.

"Like the Germans?"

Everyone winced as Jess glared at Steve, narrowing her eyes.

"I sure as hell hope you meant the Nazis, Harrington, because not *ALL* Germans are bad." She growled, the heat picking up a bit.

Steve seemed to get the message, nodding.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, the Nazis."

"Uh..."

Hopper rubbed his eyes, pinching his nose.

"If the Nazis were from another dimension, totally," Dustin says, nodding at Steve.

"Uh, it views other races, like us, as inferior to itself."

"It wants to spread, take over other dimensions," Mike adds.

"We are talking about the destruction of our world as we know it."

"That's great. That's great. That's really great. Jesus!" Steve exclaimed.

"Okay, so if this thing is like a brain that's controlling everything, then if we kill it..."

"We kill everything it controls," Mike confirms.

"We win," Dustin says.

"Theoretically," Lucas adds.

"Alright, great. So how do you kill this thing? Shoot it with Fireballs or something?" Hopper asks, clearly being sarcastic.

Dustin, not picking up the sarcasm, chuckled.

"No. No, no Fire- No Fireballs. Uh, you summon an undead army, uh, because...because zombies, you know, they don't have brains, and the Mind Flayer, it...it...it likes brains. It's just a game. It's just a game." He says, trying (and failing) to explain to defeat the monster when in reality, he didn't know how to defeat it in real life.

"What the hell are we doing here?"

"I thought we were waiting for your military backup," Dustin exclaimed.

"We are!"

"Even if they come, how are they gonna stop this? You can't just

shoot this with guns!" Mike exclaimed.

"You don't know that! We don't know anything!" Hopper yelled.

"We know that it's killed everyone in that lab!" Mike exclaimed.

"And we know the monsters are gonna molt again," Lucas added.

"And we know that's it's only a matter of time before those tunnels reach this town," Dustin adds as well.

"And we know that once that happens, this whole town goes to shit! AND I REFUSE, TO LOSE ANOTHER MEMBER OF MY FAMILY TO THESE FUCKERS!!" Jess yelled, gritting her teeth.

Everyone freezes when she screams the last sentence, her biting her lip.

"I can't... lose another member of my family..." she whispered, tugging at her necklace, rubbing the name.

Dustin hugs her, her sniffling as he places a kiss on her head.

"They're right."

Everyone turns to see Joyce standing at the end of the hallway.

"We have to kill it."

Hopper walked over to her.

"I want to kill it."

"Me too. Me, too, Joyce, okay? But how do we do that? We don't exactly know what we're dealing with here."

"No."

Hopper turns to see Jess, looking where Will was.

"But he does."

She limps to where Will was, Mike rushing and helping her catch her

balance.

"If anyone who knows how to destroy this thing, it's Will," she says, looking at him.

"He's connected to it. He'll know it's weakness."

"I thought we couldn't trust him anymore. That he's a spy for the mind flayer now."

"Yeah, but...he can't spy if he doesn't know where he is," Mike says, Jess nodding.

"And he won't...he won't know where he is."

36. Chapter 36

Summary for the Chapter:

They finally find a way to communicate with Will...but their hiding spot is blown. Luckily, they're saved by a certain telekinetic girl.

Jess, Mike, and Max were rummaging through the kitchen, gathering supplies.

"I get why El was your mage now."

Jess and Mike looked up from where they were looking, turning to her.

"What?"

"Lucas. He told me all about her."

Jess softened her glance, looking down.

"Well, he shouldn't have," Mike says, Jess, glaring at him.

"And just because you know the truth, it doesn't mean you're in our party. You do know that, right?"

"Michael..." Jess warns, staring pointedly at him.

"Yeah, I know," Max says, looking down.

Jess glared at Mike again before searching for more supplies.

"I mean, why would you want a stupid Zoomer in your party anyway?"

Mike glanced at her before going back to rummaging for the supplies.

"I'm just saying, El? She sounds like she was really awesome."

Max hears Jess chuckle, though it also sounded like she was crying as well.

"Yeah, She was." Mike agreed.

"The best of the best," Jess added, sniffling.

"Until that thing took her. Just like it took Bob and *ALMOST* took Jess."

Jess glanced at Mike worriedly as he got up and stormed off.

"Was he..."

Jess turned to Max and nodded.

"He and El were really close...I can't say how close because that's Mike's business but, yeah, they were close."

Max nodded.

"And were you two close because of the-"

"Oh, no. No, we weren't close because we both had powers...that was something I figured out I had a few hours before...it took her."

Max frowned.

"Sorry...I didn't mean to-"

"It's fine. You're just curious." Jess reassured her, giving her a pained smile.

Max looked down.

"Honestly? We got close because...at the time...I was the only girl in the group and...I like to think she saw me as this older-sister figure...even though there's technically more to the story than that."

"What do you mean?"

Jess shifted uncomfortably.

"I don't trust you enough to tell you *THAT* much about us...just the basics."

Max nods, understanding.

"She does sound like she was a badass, though."

Jess laughs, nodding.

"She was, she really was."

The girls smile at each other before continuing on with gathering the supplies.

X

Everything was in place, and Jess stood next to Mike, grabbing his hand and squeezing it worriedly.

As Hopper went to wake Will up, Mike turned to her and whispered;

"It's okay if you want to leave."

She scoffs.

"Mike, that fucker may have tried to kill me...but I need to be here...for Will."

Mike glanced at her and nods, both turning when they heard Will gasp.

Jess shifted when she noticed that his eye color had *COMPLETELY* changed, her eyebrows furrowing.

"What? What? What is this?"

He starts to struggle against the binds, Jess closing her eyes, squeezing Mike's hand.

"What? What is this? Why am I tied up?"

Joyce walked up to him.

"Will, we just want to talk to you. We're not going to hurt you."

"Where am I?"

Hopper went up to him, lifting up the drawing.

"You recognize this?"

Will shakes his head.

"Do you recognize this?"

Will shakes his head.

"Hey, we wanna help you. But to do that, we have to understand how to kill it."

Jess winced.

Bad move.

"Why am I tied up?! Why am I tied up?! Why am I tied up?! Why am I tied up?!"

He starts lurching forward, screaming.

"Why am I tied up?! Why am I tied up?!"

Jess froze when the lights start to flicker, looking around.

"LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!
LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO! LET ME GO!
LET ME GO! LET ME GO! Let me go! Let me go! Let me go..."

Jess took shaky breaths, tears threatening to spill as the lights stop flickering, Mike squeezing her hand, their breathing matching.

Joyce sat in the chair across Will, remaining silent for a second.

"Do you know what March 22nd is?"

Jess and Mike turned to each other.

"It's your birthday. Your birthday. When you turned eight, I gave you that huge box of crayons. Do you remember that? It was 120 colors. And all your friends, they got you *Star Wars* toys, but all you wanted to do was draw with all your new colors. And you drew this big

spaceship, but it wasn't from a movie. I-It was your spaceship. A rainbow ship is what you called it. And you must have used every color in the box. I took that with me to Melvold's and I put it up and I told everyone who came in, 'My son drew this.' And you were so embarrassed. But I was so proud. I was so, so proud."

Jess didn't know she was crying until she felt the tears run down her neck, but she didn't bother wiping them.

"Do you remember the day Dad left?" Jonathan spoke up, Jess turning to look at him.

He walked up to Will, kneeling down.

"We stayed up all night building Castle Byers...just the way you drew it. And it took so long because you were so bad at hammering."

The two Byers laughed, sniffling.

"You'd miss the hammer every time. And then it started raining, but we stayed out there anyway. We were both sick for like a week after that. But we just had to finish it, didn't we? We just had to."

"Do you remember the first day we met?"

Jess turned to Mike, her lips trembling as she saw the tear running down his cheek, squeezing his hand for comfort and strength.

"It was...It was the first day of kindergarten. I knew nobody. I had no friends and...I just felt so alone and so scared, but..."

He squeezed Jess' hand, as if to draw more strength, looking up at Will.

"I saw you on the swings and you were alone, too. You were just swinging by yourself. And I just walked up to you and...I asked. I asked if you wanted to be my friend. And you said yes. You said yes. It was the best thing I've ever done."

Jess bites her lip, glancing down before saying;

"Do you remember that day in December when we were nine?"

Everyone looked at her, Jess looking at Will, her lips trembling as more tears ran down.

"Gabby had died a month ago. My little sister and...I was so sad and depressed. I pushed you and the boys away because of what my parents were telling me."

She wiped her eyes, letting out a shuddering breath.

"That day, there were warnings of a snowstorm and...I thought...no one would care if I died, right?"

Mike flinched by her side, but Jess kept talking.

"I was lying in front of her tombstone, shivering in the cold, allowing myself to be covered in the snow...just accepting my death..."

Then, she let a small, sad smile appear on her lips.

"Then I heard you yelling, yelling at the boys to hurry up, wiping the snow off my body and wrapping me in something warm...it probably was your jacket."

She chuckled, wiping her eyes.

"You were telling me to hold on, that the boys were coming...making sure that I wasn't alone."

She sobs, covering her mouth.

"You saved me Will...you helped me continue fighting and to keep pushing through life because...I still had you and the boys...I still had my family that I found all on my own and...you helped me find peace in myself, even if it did take a while for that peace to come...you saved me *hermano*."

Will was crying, looking at the Colombian.

Jess sniffles, hugging onto Mike who was also crying, hugging her as well.

"Will, baby..." Joyce whispered, catching his attention.

"If you're in there, just please, please talk to us. Please, honey, please, can you do that for me? Please. I love you so much."

Jess watched as Will's face crumbled, his lips trembling and his eyebrows furrowing, shaking.

Then he stops, and Jess freezes when he whispered;

"Let me go."

Jess crumbled, burying her face into Mike's shoulder.

Then Hopper told everyone to follow him, making everyone have their emotions a mixture of sad and confused.

What did he possibly get from Will's screaming to let him go?

X

Jess walked with Hopper, furrowing her eyebrows when he grabbed something from the wall.

"What happened?" Dustin asks, catching the sight of her red-rimmed eyes alarming.

"I think he's talking, just not with words," Hopper says, writing down on the envelope.

Jess looked at the envelope, her eyes widening.

"What is that?" Steve asks.

"Morse Code." The boys and Jess says, looking at him.

"H-E-R-E." Hopper spells out.

"Here."

Hopper sighs.

"Will's still in there. He's talking to us."

Jess let out a relieved sigh, smiling at Mike, glad that not all hope

was lost.

X

They were back in the shed, Jonathan bringing a boombox and placing a mixtape in it, playing *Should I Stay Or Should I Go?*.

"Do you remember the first time I played you this? Mom and Dad were both arguing in the next room. So I played you the mixtape I made you. And it was the first time you got into music. Real music."

C

"And then the party escaped into the sewers, and there were those big insect things, and you guys were still on level one."

C L

"We were showing Gabby how to ride her bike for the first time, riding through the neighborhood, and she lost her balance and fell."

C L O

"Then you cast Fog Cloud and you saved us. You saved the whole Party."

"She was crying so much cause it hurt and we just looked at each other and fell off our bikes, hurting ourselves too. It was so stupid we started laughing, and then, she eventually started laughing too. You made her forget about the pain by making her laugh."

C L O S

"You saw that little girl and she was in the sandbox and she was crying."

C L O S E

"You gave her your Tonka Truck and I told you we couldn't afford to buy another one.

.....

C L O S E G

"You said she should have it because she's sad. 'She's sad, Mommy.'"

.....

C L O S E G A

"I love you so much."

.....

C L O S E G A T

"So, so much."

.....

C L O S E G A T E

They suddenly hear the phone ring, all of them looking up.

Will closes his eyes, them moving behind his closed eyelids.

"Hey. Hey, can you hear me?"

Jess went to him, grabbing onto Will's arm, gasping when she saw tunnels.

She released her hold on him, looking absolutely terrified.

"It knows. It knows where we are."

"Oh, shit." Joyce cursed, grabbing the syringe, pushing it in his arm and pushing the sedative in him.

They walk out, Jess gasping when they hear the monsters roaring.

"Oh...FUCK!" she exclaimed, running back in, creating a little flame in her palm.

"They're coming!"

"What?"

Jess makes the flame appear under the binds, it snapping off as everyone helped get the binds off Will.

Jess grabbed onto Mike's hand and they both ran back into the house, Jess almost losing her balance a few times.

She rushes to Dustin's side, looking out the window.

"Hey. Hey, get away from the windows!"

The kids looked at Hopper, immediately moving to the back of the room.

"Do you know how to use this?"

"What?" Jonathan asks.

"Can you use this?"

"Uh..."

"I can," Nancy speaks up, causing Hopper to toss her the rifle.

Jess holds onto Dustin, her chin dipping down, ready to fight when needed.

"Where are they?"

The monsters were growling, Jess grabbing firmly onto Dustin's shirt, him having his arms around her, keeping her up.

They hear loud thudding, causing all of them to turn to the left, gasping.

"What are they doing?"

Dustin could feel Jess' chest rise and fall quickly, tension all over her body.

The monsters snarl, causing all of them to turn to the right, gasping.

The monsters were groaning, Jess furrowing her eyebrows.

Why weren't they attacking?

They could hear the screeching and it sounded like they were in pain.

A demodog crashes through the window, everyone yelling in shock, Dustin pushing Jess behind him.

Jess stepped closer to it, making it float, seeing how it just limped down when she slammed it against the floor.

"Holy shit."

"Is it dead?" Max asked, causing Jess to roll her eyes.

She was warming up to Max, there's no doubt about it but, honestly?

"It looks pretty dead to me." She says, causing Max to raise her hands in defense.

They hear the door creak, causing everyone to turn to the door.

The first lock on the door suddenly turns, Jess tilting her head down again, gripping onto Dustin tighter.

Everyone starts to ready whatever weapon they had in their hands, Jess breathing in shakily as the other lock becomes undone.

The door opens and Jess just freezes, her eyes widening, her breath getting caught in her throat, and as every time *her* foot touched the floor as she entered the house, it sounded like lightning had touched the earth.

Dustin felt Jess release her grip on him, causing him to turn to see the shock on her face, tears starting to form in her eyes, hearing her take a shuddering breath in.

He didn't blame her as he turned to see the girl that had walked in.

It was Eleven.

No...Not Eleven...

It was El.

Jess felt the heavy teardrops run down her cheeks as she walked past Dustin, who thankfully stopped Steve from preventing her to walk forward, hearing movement and glancing momentarily to see Mike had moved from behind Hopper, also with shock in his face.

Jess watched as El's face completely soften when her eyes landed on them, her lips parting slightly, her eyebrows furrowing slightly.

Jess let out a shuddering sob, covering her mouth as Mike let out a relieved sigh, dropping the trophy he had in his hand, never leaving El's stare.

El's lips trembled upwards, breathing in and out steadily yet shakily, the pure joy in her face extremely readable even to anyone who didn't know her.

Jess lowers her hands, letting them fall to her side and she let out the hugest, brightest, toothiest smile that has *EVER* graced her face, the smile reaching her eyes for the *FIRST TIME* in a while.

As for Mike?

He didn't make any sound of relief, or had tears (yet) that were ready to fall down his cheeks to release the stress and depression he felt the entire year El had been gone.

No, his big, wide smile said that all for him.

And El smiled back, her eyes brimming with tears, sighing out in relief that finally, after 353 days of them calling, and 356 days of separation...

They were FINALLY back together.

37. Chapter 37

Summary for the Chapter:

Jess and Mike are FINALLY reunited with El...but that doesn't stop their utter disbelief and feeling of betrayal towards Hopper when they learn that he's been hiding her.

She's here.

She's *REALLY* here.

Soon. Promise. Love you.

It wasn't in her head, she actually heard her.

Jess limped as fast she could towards her, not caring that her sobs were becoming audible, tears blurring her vision slightly, but she could see El grinning at her, walking towards her and she sobs out her nickname for the telekinetic.

"iiiONCE!!!"

El sobs as she throws her arms around the Colombian, immediately noticing the bandages and the new clothes and the limping, realizing that her sister was hurt, but pushing that worry aside for now, especially as she felt the girl tightening her grip on her, afraid that she'll disappear.

"JESSIE!!!"

Jess lets out another shuddering sob at the nickname, pulling from the hug to smile at her, placing a trembling kiss on her forehead, closing her eyes.

El smiled at her sister before turning to see Mike still staring at her, as if still couldn't believe she was here.

She released her grip on Jessie, walking towards him, and he started to walk towards her, whispering her name;

"Eleven."

She let out a shuddering gasp as his name tumbled out of her mouth, grabbing onto him, his arms wrapping around her.

"Mike!"

Mike buried his face into El's shoulder, taking shuddering breaths, them swaying forward and backward, feeling how tightly she clutched onto his back, not wanting to let go.

And he didn't either, hugging her so tight, making sure there was no space left between them.

El was crying again, not believing that she was hugging the boy that protected her that week in 1983, the one who taught her what a promise and friend was, who promised all those little things before they got separated.

She held onto him, letting out a shaky sigh as he sniffled, tears running down her cheeks.

Someone asked a question (Max), but neither of them seemed to care, as Mike's breathing seemed to calm a little, still holding onto El as if she'd disappear if he let go.

El found that her hands wouldn't stop moving, gripping tightly onto Mike's jacket for one second, and loosening her grip on it the next...but she still wouldn't let go of him.

Mike glanced up to see Jess watching them, wiping the tears with a smile on her face and he couldn't help but break from the hug for a second...

And grabbing Jess and pulling her into the hug, the girls laughing as they all wrapped their arms around each other, leaning their foreheads together, giving each other smiles.

They pull apart, Jess placing a hand on El's cheek, Mike holding onto her hands.

"I never gave up on you."

"Neither did I," Jess whispered, smiling wide.

"I called you every night. Every night for-"

"353 days," El says, the smile slipping from Jess' lips, her eyes widening.

Mike let in a gasp, still staring at El, realizing that she was counting as well, Jess' eyes brimming with tears again.

El seemed to notice the confusion and the shock that appeared on their faces, because she adds;

"I heard."

Jess let out a shocked whimper, that sounded like a mix between a hurt and a startled animal.

Mike was shocked, but, mainly confused because-

"Why didn't you tell us you were there? That you were okay?"

"Because I wouldn't let her."

Jess and Mike turned to see Hopper, barely processing what he had just said.

El glanced at the Chief as he walked towards her, Jessie and Mike stepping away from her.

Mike and Jess walked behind him, what he said still processing when;

"The hell is this? Where you been?"

"Where have *YOU* been?" El retorts, looking at him.

Hopper says nothing but brings El for a hug, rubbing her shoulder.

Then...it clicked.

"Because I wouldn't let her."

This whole time...this whole *DAMN TIME*...

El had been right under their noses.

"You've been hiding her," Mike states, Jess, feeling the anger radiating from him.

She didn't know what to think about it.

All she really felt was *BETRAYAL*.

"You've been hiding her this whole time!" Mike exclaimed, pushing Hopper.

"Hey!"

He grabs Mike from the cuff of his shirt, making Mike stop.

Jess widened her eyes, getting between them, pushing them off each other, sending an unreadable glance at Hopper, that also screamed; 'Don't *EVEN* think about it.'

Hopper hesitated, knowing he had explaining to do.

"Let's talk. *ALONE*."

Jess glanced at Mike before grabbing his hand, giving a smile to El that looked *AND* felt fake, especially with all the emotions swirling in her head.

And they followed Hopper into another room.

X

"Protecting her!" Mike exclaimed, Jess, following behind him, still refusing to say anything.

Mike can do all the talking.

He turns to Hopper.

"PROTECTING HER?!"

"Listen. Listen to me."

Mike glares at him while Jess meets his eyes, and it nearly breaks Hopper's heart because she's *STRUGGLING* not to cry.

"The more people know about her, the more danger she's in. And the more danger you and your family are in-"

"Oh, what, *WE* should be thanking you then?" Mike snaps, emphasizing the 'we', clearly hearing 'bullshit' from Hopper's excuse.

"I'm not asking you to thank me! I asking you to try to understand."

Understand?

UNDERSTAND?!

HE LITERALLY ATTEMPTED TO COMMIT SUICIDE BECAUSE HE THOUGHT EL WAS DEAD!!

HE MADE JESSICA CRY AFTER SHE SAVED HIM FROM SAID ATTEMPT!

HE AND JESS BOTH WENT THROUGH DEPRESSION AND WENT THROUGH SHIT THE WHOLE YEAR BECAUSE OF THAT!!

JESSICA FUCKING COMMITTED SELF-HARM MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE DEPRESSION!

SO, HOW CAN *HE* UNDERSTAND?!

"I don't! I don't understand!" he yelled.

"That's fine. That's fine! Just do not blame *her*! Alright? She's upset enough as it is."

Mike freezes, eyes going wide and Jess drops her mouth open.

"You *ACTUALLY* think, that we would blame El, for all of the *FUCKING SHIT WE WENT THROUGH?!* *THINKING SHE WAS DEAD?!*" she exclaimed, her breath catching as the tears started to fall.

"When, in reality, SHE WAS UNDER OUR NOSES THE WHOLE, FUCKING, TIME!!" She yelled, covering her mouth as she sobbed.

"I don't blame her, I BLAME YOU! I BLAME YOU!" Mike yelled, anger and fury burning in his eyes.

"That's okay, kid. That's okay."

"No! Nothing about this is okay! NOTHING ABOUT THIS IS OKAY!" Mike screams, pushing Hopper.

Jess froze, widening her eyes.

"Oh, jeez-

"YOU'RE A STUPID, DISGUSTING, LYING- YOU PIECE OF SHIT!!" Mike screamed, punching Hopper with all he had, Hopper trying to stop him.

"Okay. All right! Stop it!"

"Mike..." Jess whispered, walking towards him, tears running down in full storm.

"LIAR! LIAR! LIAR!" Mike yelled, still hitting Hopper.

"Stop it. It's okay."

"Mike," Jess says again, reaching to him.

"Stop it! Stop it!" Hopper exclaims, holding onto Mike, Jess stopping for a second.

"Liar! Liar!" Mike cries, tears running down his cheeks.

Jess watched as Hopper hugged Mike as he sobbed, tears running down her cheeks.

"You're okay, kid. You're okay. I'm sorry, kid."

He looks at Jess who's glancing at him in shock, tears still running down her cheeks of constellations, before she went to Mike and pulled him from Hopper, who then turned and hugged her.

"It isn't fair."

"I know, Mike."

"We deserved to know where she was! And then, maybe-"

"All the things that happened to us within the year could have been avoided, I know Mike. But...she's here now. And that's what matters."

Mike sniffles before nodding, Jess sighing before hugging him tightly.

She's here now.

38. Chapter 38

Summary for the Chapter:

After forming a plan to get the 'virus' out of Will, an unexpected visitor comes.

El was hugging Lucas and Dustin, her arms around the two.

"We missed you," Lucas says.

"I missed you too." She says.

And it's true, she did.

She missed Dustin's energetic personality that always seemed to make everyone who's in a bad mood smile, and she missed Lucas' passion for protecting his friends.

"We talked about you pretty much everyday," Dustin says, as they break apart the hug.

She glanced at Dustin, about to say something when she noticed something in his smile.

Are those-?

She reached for his mouth, touching it.

"Teeth."

"What?"

"You have teeth." She states, noticing the big difference from the last time she saw them.

Last year, he didn't have any in his upper row.

Now, he does.

Dustin smiles, chuckling, glad she noticed.

"Oh."

Lucas grinned at him, nodding.

"You like these pearls?" he asks, proceeding to purr.

El is caught off guard by the sudden noise, and Lucas shakes his head.

"I don't understand how Jess doesn't find that annoying," Lucas states, catching El's attention.

"Jessie?"

"Well, it makes her laugh! Especially when she tries to do it back!" Dustin retorts, defending the Colombian.

"Dustin."

He turns to El, who smiled at him.

"Thanks for keeping her happy."

Dustin blushes, but grins.

"Of course El!"

Lucas rolled his eyes.

"Eleven?"

El looks up and sees the *girl* that was talking to Mike and Jess, walking towards her.

Max, unknown to the fact El does *NOT* like her, is absolutely nervous.

This is the girl that Lucas told her was practically a badass and was *REALLY* close to Jess, so, she really wants to be her friend.

"Hey. Um, I'm Max."

She holds out her hand, in form of greeting.

"I've heard a lot about you."

El just stares at her before walking past her, to Joyce.

Max drops her hand, momentarily shocked that the girl passed her.

"Don't worry about it," Lucas tells her, causing her to look at him.

"Yeah, she doesn't trust people that easily. Give her time, she'll warm up to you." Dustin agrees, giving Max a small smile.

Meanwhile, El went to Joyce, hugging the woman.

"Hey..."

El almost breaks into sobs again as Joyce hugs her back, never really feeling the pure motherly love before.

"Hey, sweetheart."

El can kind of understand now why Jess calls Joyce 'Mama Byers', because to her, it felt as if the woman can properly fill that role she *DESPERATELY* wants in her life...

To have a mom.

El lets a few tears run down as Joyce squeezed her tight, her hugging the woman back as tight as she could as well.

When they pull apart, Joyce places her hands on El's cheeks.

"Hey."

She glanced at the woman who, even though she only met once in her life, looked at her as if she was her own daughter.

Though, there's *ONE* thing that's stuck in her mind.

"Can I see him?"

Joyce sighs before motioning for her to follow, taking her to a room in the house.

Joyce opens the door and El steps in, seeing Will laying on the bed.

She walks towards him.

"H-He's not doing well."

El places a hand on the bed.

"I know. I saw and...Jessie told me."

"Something came up with Will that is just REALLY important right now. We...we think he's...."

•---. --- • • -..

Possessed

"What else did you see?"

El looked at Joyce and then back at Will.

x

El looked at the cardboard that had the words **CLOSE GATE** on it, Joyce glancing at her.

"You opened this gate before, right?"

El glanced up, hesitating before answering.

"Yes."

"Do you think if we got you back there, that you could close it?"

She glanced at Joyce before looking forward.

X

"It's not like it was before. It's grown."

Jess was standing between Mike and El, looking at Hopper as he explained the situation.

"A lot. And, I mean, that's considering we can get in there. The place is crawling with those dogs."

"Demodogs," Dustin speaks up, causing Jess to glance at him, trying (and failing) to hide the small smile creeping on her face.

Hopper turns to him.

"I'm sorry, what?"

"I said, uh, Demodogs. Like Demogorgon and dogs. You put them together, it sounds pretty badass--"

"How is this important right now?"

"It's not. I'm sorry."

"I can do it."

Jess looks up at El and panic rose in her chest when she realized what El meant.

"You're not hearing me."

"I'm hearing you. I can do it."

"Then I'm coming with you," Jess says, looking at her.

El frowns at her.

"Jessie...you're hurt--"

"I don't care, *Once*. I don't. I'm helping you." Jess hissed, fear building in her eyes.

El grabbed her hands, rubbing her knuckles.

"Even if El can, there's still another problem. If the brain dies, the body dies." Mike speaks up, causing the girls to turn to him, momentarily forgetting their argument.

"I thought that was the whole point," Max says, confused.

"It is, but if we're really right about this...I mean, if El closes the gate and kills the mind flayer's army..."

"Will's a part of that army." Lucas realized.

"Closing the gate will kill him."

Jess sighed.

"Well, fuck."

X

They followed Joyce into her room where she had Will, Jess, Mike, and El walking together, holding onto each other's hands.

"He likes it cold."

"What?"

"It's what Will kept saying to me. He likes it cold."

Joyce walks over to the open window and closed it.

"We keep giving it what it wants."

"If this is a virus, and Will's the host, then..." Nancy says, trailing off.

"Then we need to make the host uninhabitable." Jonathan finishes.

"So if he likes it cold..."

"We need to burn it out of him," Joyce says.

"We have to do it somewhere he doesn't know this time," Mike says, Jess nodding.

"Yeah, somewhere far away." Dustin agreed.

At that moment, there was knocking on the door.

Everyone turned, Steve going to answer it.

"Who the hell would be coming here this time of night?" Jess asked, everyone, heading to the living room.

"Listen, kid, I don't know who- Hey!"

Steve gets pushed back by a figure that's smaller than him, and Jess *FREEZES* when the person turns and makes eye contact with her...

Green eyes on Blue ones.

"G-Gabriella?"

39. Chapter 39

Summary for the Chapter:

Gabriella's back, and everyone's shocked and happy to see her...ESPECIALLY her sister Jessica.

A few hours earlier...

"Gabby, you can't just leave!"

"Oh yeah? Watch me!"

The gang was watching as the two girls were yelling at each other, Kali trying to prevent Gabby from leaving, and Gabby packing everything she owned (including a couple hundred dollars), into a rather large bag.

"We need you!"

"Oh, really?"

Gabby sends a death glare that punctured through Kali's soul, making her flinch.

"NAME ONE TRIP TO KILL A MAN OR WOMAN OR WHOEVER WAS INVOLVED IN WHAT HAPPENED TO US WHERE I WENT THROUGH WITH IT!!"

Kali opened her mouth.

Closed it.

And opened it again.

"I WAS NEVER MADE FOR THIS LIFE!! I NEVER FUCKING WAS!!"
Gabby screamed, making everyone flinch.

"Gabby, please. I'm your sister."

Gabby stares at Kali.

And BURSTS out LAUGHING.

She's being cruel and mean, she knows.

But...do sisters that care about each other push them on the floor, and don't apologize later?

"This BRUISE begs to differ!" Gabby snaps, gritting her teeth as she zips up her bag.

"I'm going back to Hawkins to Jane, Jessie and our 'group of nerds' back home." She says, air quoting and glaring directly at the gang, and they shrink back, familiar with the fear they actually had of the Colombian.

A Latina with powers and is hot-tempered?

Yeah, they try not to piss her off.

"AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!" She yelled at Kali before storming off.

"I'LL KILL THEM!!"

Gabby stops, as the threat crackled through her eardrums .

She's not sure if the threat is empty or not...

But she stares back at Kali, and the woman visibly shrinks back at the expression she throws at her, as does the gang.

....And at the growing vines that sprout from the earthy ground, illuminating her and making her scary as fuck.

"I DARE you to pull through with that threat and AVOID the consequences of it, EIGHT . I DARE YOU."

And she turns, leaving from the toxic environment she's known for years...

And returning back to her TRUE HOME .

Present...

Gabby doesn't fight back the tears as she looks at the 13-year-old in across the hallway of the Byers' house.

Jessie has bandages and scars around her arms and one on her cheeks...

But...she has a lot more freckles, and is taller than she thought she was...

...And looks like she's been sad and tired and...beat down for most of her life.

But, she can't help but smile at the sight because this is her sister.

Her...*hermana major*.

"Jessie."

X

Jess covers her mouth, sobbing out and before she knows it...

Her arms are around the younger girl, both falling to the ground, both exclaiming in shock.

But they laugh, and Jess shakily takes Gabby's face.

She inspects her face, tears blurring her vision a bit.

But she doesn't care in the slightest because she lets out a shaky laugh, her lips trembling in a smile.

"You're alive!!"

Gabby's heart shattered from that sentence because her sister had gone for so long having the knowledge that she was dead...but she really wasn't.

"I always was."

Jess laughs again and starts peppering Gabby's face with kisses, like she would do when they were younger.

"G-Gabby?!"

The sisters turn to see the boys, El and Max standing at the sides, El

smiling with shock in her eyes that Gabby came.

Gabby felt her breath hitch at the sight of them, her eyes watering again.

Oh...she forgot how much she missed her and her sister's group of *nerds*.

"Hola, chicos."

The boys barreled towards the two, and El witnessed the reunion between Gabby and the Party...minus Will.

She pushes that thought away as she saw Gabby being hugged by all the boys, shouts of joy, 'We thought you died!', 'You've been alive this whole time?!', and even an 'I'm dating your sister now!' from Dustin that caused a 'WHAT?!' reaction from Gabby that caused the boys and Jessie to burst out laughing.

But, no one expected the boys to start crying as they hugged the girls, placing kisses on their cheeks, the girls 'awwing' and hugging the boys tight.

But, of course, Gabby then notices someone that's missing.

"Wait...where's Will?" she asks, glancing at boys and Jess.

And she wasn't prepared to see their faces fall, Jess shifting uncomfortably.

"Uh...there's something we need to tell you about Will."

Jess glanced at Gabby, who was staring at her, her eyebrows furrowed.

Wait...she recognizes that look.

"Gabby...random question...do you remember anything from 1976 or something?"

Gabby blinks before smiling.

"That depends...what do you remember?"

Jess nods.

"So you do remember everything."

Gabby smiled.

"I do...I remember we were raised in the lab up until you were seven and I was five."

"Wait, what?!"

The girls turn to Lucas and Dustin, jaws dropping.

"Long story we don't have time for at the moment. What we need to do is catch Gabby up on everything that happened between last year and now."

"Oh...um...I actually know everything." Gabby says, sheepishly.

She nods at El.

"J-...El told me everything that happened when she found me."

"Wait, WHAT?!" Jess exclaimed, El flinching as the blue eyes looked at her brown ones.

"It's a long story, and from the looks *AND* sound of it, you guys didn't have time to really talk," Gabby says quickly, worried that Jess was going to be mad.

Jess turns to Gabby and softens, nodding.

That was true...they had *JUST* recently got reunited before everyone went back to plan mode.

"Yeah, well...I think there are a few things you need to hear from our side."

X

The next thirty minutes are consisted of everyone catching Gabby up

on what happened in the past year and now...at least...what was important to Will's situation.

The more personal stuff would be for another time but for now, they tell her of Will's condition...

And her reaction was kind of heartbreaking as she covered her mouth in horror, shaking her head.

Then, they brought her to see Will and as she squeezed his hand, an unreadable look on her face as gazed at him.

She turns back to group and growls;

"Burn that fucking monster OUT of my best friend."

40. Chapter 40

Summary for the Chapter:

El leaves to close the gate...but not before an emotional 'see-you-later' conversation with Jessie and Mike.

Jess was pacing in the living room, biting at her nails.

"Jessie? ¿Qué pasa?"

Jess turned to Gabby, a worried expression on her face.

"I...I don't know what to do...I want to go help El...I REALLY do. It's just..."

"You're afraid that if you push yourself too much...you'll break your promise to Mike about surviving this," Gabby says, Jess nodding.

"And even though I want to ignore the fact I'm injured...I can't."

Gabby nodded.

"Well, El's leaving soon and, whether or not you're going to go help her, you need to talk to her."

X

"Let's go outside for a bit."

El turned to look at Mike, who, once again, looked broken.

She nodded, taking his hand, still reassuring him that she was here.

That she was back.

They walk outside, looking out at the black sky.

"I saw," she whispered, looking at him, two tears falling from her black eyeshadowed eyes, them running down her cheeks.

He looks at her, furrowing his eyebrows.

"Jessie...doing that to her arms, getting hurt from her mama and papa, and you...jumping off the cliff..." she says, causing Mike to widen his eyes, his lips parting, tears streaming down his cheeks now.

"I wanted to go back...to stop you two-" she says, her voice cracking.

"No, El, it's not your fault." Mike quickly says, turning to her, grabbing her shoulders.

She breathes in shakily.

"Jessica and I, we...we were stupid, beyond incredibly stupid. We just wanted to end all the heartbreak and pain we were feeling and instead of coming to our friends or each other, we resorted to worse situations. I'm so glad Jess was there to save me like you did but...I made her cry El. I made her feel worse." Mike says, shaking his head.

El wipes his tears, her frowned lips trembling.

Mike holds onto her hand on his cheek and places a soft kiss on it, rubbing it softly.

They look at each other, El lowering their joined hands, squeezing it lightly.

"Just...be careful, alright?" Mike asked, looking at her, a lone tear running down his cheek.

"I can't lose you again...WE can't lose you again," he says, his voice cracking as he repeats his statement, making sure to include the girl they saw as their sister.

"You won't lose me. Neither of you will." El reassured him, squeezing their joined hands.

"Do you promise?" Mike asked, holding her gaze.

"Promise," El says, looking at his brown eyes.

She leans in, tugging at their joined hands, pulling him a bit closer,

their noses touching as they leaned in for a goodbye kiss.

"El."

El turns to see Hopper, a bit annoyed that he interrupted their moment.

"Come on, let's go. It's time."

She turned back to Mike who nodded, whispering; "Okay."

She, squeezes his hand one final time, whispering;

"I promise I'll come back."

She lets go of him and starts to walk towards Hopper when;

"El!"

She turns, only to be engulfed in a hug by Jess, who raised her hand in a 'wait 5 minutes' gesture to Hopper who rolls his eyes, getting in the truck.

El hugs her back, her fingers curling in the back of her shirt.

"Jessie, you need to stay. For Mike and Gabby. They need you here. Don't worry, I can do it. I have gotten stronger."

Silence before;

"Okay...okay. I'll stay."

El sighed out in relief, Jess releasing from the hug, pressing her forehead onto her sister's.

"Just...be careful. And come back in one piece and still breathing, okay? If...if Mike and I lost you again we..."

Jess shuts her eyes, choking on her sobs, tears running down.

El lets tears of her own run down as she wipes the tears from Jess' cheeks.

"I don't think we can keep fighting. I just got both of my sisters back and...now the lab could be taking one of them away from me again."

El hugs her again, hesitating before, very slowly, saying;

"Hermanas para siempre..."

Jess freezes, removing herself from the hug, her eyes widened, looking at El in shock.

El just smiles sadly at her.

"¿Claro?"

Jess laughs before nodding.

"Yes...sisters forever."

They smile at each other, squeezing each other's hands before letting go, El walking to the truck and opening the door and getting in.

Jess watches with wide eyes, taking shuddering breaths, her lips trembling as tears ran down her cheeks of constellations.

Mike stood next to her and they wordlessly grabbed onto each other's hands, squeezing gently.

El looked back to them, sadness and heartbreak in her features because, after only reuniting with each other only for the past half-an-hour...

...They're torn from each other yet again...

Mike just stared at the back of the truck as it drove away, squeezing Jess' hand tightly, both terrified of the same thing...

...Both terrified that their talks they just had with her would be their last...

...That she'll BREAK her promise and not come back...

Even though if that does happen...they will not be mad...

Jess immediately turns, letting go of Mike's hand, and is about to run into the house and probably lock herself in a room and sob...

...Only for Dustin to stop her, looking at her with worry in his eyes, his eyebrows furrowing.

"Hey, you okay?"

X

Steve watches the interaction between Dustin and the girl he claimed had 'stolen-his-heart', and despite everything he told Dustin to act like he doesn't care...

He's glad Dustin throws that all out the window as the girl's face visibly crumples, throwing her arms around the boy and sobs, Dustin hugging back and whispering reassuring words like he's done this before.

Shit...he probably has...and with this one too.

Dustin had told him about 'Jessica Hernandez' and Steve had made a little joke that 'she always wears long-sleeves, she must be cold all the time', and he immediately regretted that later by the death glare Dustin threw at him, telling him there must be more to the story.

And boy...there *WAS*.

From when he saw the girl bleeding nearly to death, forcing herself to stay awake despite wanting to escape the pain, the healed scars from when Mrs. Byers cut open the shirt to reveal the fresh wounds (especially the bullet scar), and the scars on her arms that looked like she put them there *HERSELF* and he won't admit he felt for the girl when she *BEGGED* him to keep the boys from seeing her getting patched up.

All he could gather about Jess was that she was badass who was stubborn as hell.

And he could definitely see her breaking down every once in a while and it would be with these little shitheads that *unfortunately* were starting to grab ahold of his heart.

"I may be a shitty boyfriend...but it turns out I'm actually a pretty damn good babysitter."

And, holy shit he was.

X

Mike had walked inside, wanting to escape the pitiful glances and Jess' sobs as she was being consoled by Dustin.

"Mike!"

He turns to see Gabby, glancing at him with an emphatic expression.

"...Hey, Gabs."

Gabby looked down before saying;

"She missed you...did you know that?"

Mike stayed quiet, looking at Gabby as she smiled.

"When she found me and realized who I was...she told me about you guys...about how she watched you and Jessie talk to her on the Supercomms...how some days you were really happy and excited because something happened that was funny or amazing...but most of the time you guys were just sad...and how much it killed herself inside to not answer so...she left signs that she was there in order to make you guys keep fighting."

Gabby walks to Mike and stands on her tiptoes, wiping his cheek.

Tears.

"So...you guys need to keep fighting because she needs you guys right now. Not just you and Jessie, but the entire Party. She needs all of you to keep fighting...so we can *FINALLY* win."

Mike sniffles and chuckles.

"How did you become more mature Gabby?"

Gabby smiled sadly.

"I grew up."

41. Chapter 41

Summary for the Chapter:

El and Hopper talk and make-up.

El was looking out the window, the tension in the car extremely thick.

"So, what, we're just not going to talk about it, huh?"

She turns to him.

"About what?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'm just curious, you know, why all of the sudden you look like some kind of MTV punk."

El looked aside, sighing.

"I'm not mad, kid. I just want to know where you've been. That's all."

She looked ahead, knowing that Chicago was going to be a conversation for another time.

"To see Mama."

Hopper looked ahead.

Shit...

"Okay. How'd you get there?"

"A truck."

"A truck?"

"A big truck."

"A big truck? Who's truck was it?"

"A man's."

"A man's?"

"A nice man."

Hopper glanced from her to the road, disbelief in his features.

"Okay. So let me just get this straight in my head. So a nice man in a big truck, he drove you to your mama's, and then what? Your Aunt Becky gave you those clothes and that makeup?"

El felt a clash of emotions in her stomach, rubbing the bracelet in her wrist.

"I..."

She shook her head.

"I shouldn't have left."

Even though she learned a lot about herself the past few days, she feels really guilty about leaving...about abandoning Mike and Jessie even if they didn't know she was alive.

She felt guilty about bursting out in anger and destroying everything in her fight with Hopper when they could have tried to talk it out about what she did.

Hopper shook his head.

"Mmm-mmm. No. No, this isn't on you, kid. I should've been there. I should never have lied to you about your mom. Or about when you could leave. A lot of things I shouldn't have done."

El glanced down as her eyes watered.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm..."

Hopper inhales sharply, as if to prevent himself from crying.

"Like I'm some kind of black hole or something."

El glanced at Hopper, a tear running down her cheek.

"A black hole?"

"Yeah, it's a...You know, it's this thing in outer space. It's like, it sucks everything towards it and destroys it. Sara had a picture book about outer space. She loved it."

El furrowed her eyebrows.

Sara?

"Who's Sara?"

"Sara?"

El nods, as if confirming the fact he never mentioned her before.

"Sara's my girl. She's my little girl."

El's lips parted.

His daughter.

"Where is she?"

"Well, that's kind of the thing, kid. She, uh...she left us."

Oh.

El recognized that tone in his voice...

The way his voice had gotten sadder as he said that sentence.

"She...was hit by a car. We were crossing the streets on our bikes. I had already crossed and when I turned to look at her, she was pedaling towards me, and I told her to look both ways to see if a car was going to pass but, of course, typical little sister, she didn't listen. So...she got hit. And we rushed her to the hospital but, by the time we got there, she was..."

"Gone," El says, finishing the memory and realizing what Hopper meant.

Of course, Gabby wasn't really gone but, that doesn't excuse the pain

Jessie felt for those years without her.

"Yeah. The black hole. It got her. And somehow...I've just been scared, you know? I've just been scared that it would take you, too."

El looked at him, the tear-streaks in her cheeks drying slowly.

"I think that's why I get...so mad."

El felt another tear run down her cheek as she glanced sadly at Hopper.

"I'm so sorry. For everything. I could be so...so..."

"Stupid?" She says, her voice cracking a bit.

Hopper chuckles.

"Yeah. Stupid."

El chuckles, sniffling.

"Just really stupid."

She grabs onto his hand, squeezing gently.

"I've been stupid, too." She says, admitting it to him, and to herself.

"I guess we broke our rule."

El chuckles as she smiles.

"I don't hate it, by the way. This whole...look." Hopper says, gesturing to her new outfit.

She smirks, noting to tell Gabby that he liked what he did with the outfit.

"It's kinda cool."

She smiles, hearing Gabby's excited tone in her head.

Bitchin'!

"Bitchin'."

Hopper smiles, trying to hold back the laugh that's bubbling in his chest.

"Okay. Sure."

He turns to her, smirking.

"Bitchin'."

El chuckles and wipes her tears, sniffling.

Yeah...Bitchin'.

42. Chapter 42

Summary for the Chapter:

Max and Jess...the badass duo I tease for S3.

As Dustin and Steve were clearing out the fridge, Jess and Gabby were cuddled up together, whispering to each other, Gabby being caught up on everything that happened.

"If our parents come and show their sorry faces to Hawkins, I swear I'm going to *MURDER* them," Gabby growled, tracing her finger on the scars of her sister's arm.

Jess smiles, looking at her little sister.

"You'll have to get in line then."

Gabby giggled, laying her head on Jess' good shoulder, Jess leaning on her head.

She looks up to see Mike still pacing, her eyebrows furrowing.

"Mike, would you just stop already?" she hears Lucas ask, glancing up to see him sweeping the broken glass, Max holding the tray where he's sweeping.

"You weren't in there, okay, Lucas? That lab is swarming with hundreds of those dogs." Mike snaps at him, glaring.

"Demodogs!"

"Not helping Dustin!" Jess exclaims, getting up and walking to Mike, placing a hand on his shoulder, him glancing at her, bandages and all.

"Dad will take care of her," she reassured him.

"Like she needs protection." Max scoffs, Lucas wincing as Mike turned to glare at her.

"Excuse me, Max? Have you forgotten what those things did to Jess?" he snarls.

"Mike, hey, calm down." Jess hissed, pushing him back slightly.

She turns to Max, frowning.

"But, he is right Max. I have powers and I almost got *KILLED* by them. I'm just glad Dad is with her, for the extra protection."

Max frowns.

"Sorry, I didn't mean it like that."

"It's fine. Just...I'm really worried as well." Jess whispered, Dustin, walking up to her and hugging her, rubbing her shoulder.

"Listen, dude, a coach calls a play in a game, bottom line, you execute it. All right?" Steve says, looking to Mike, Jess furrowing her eyebrows, not knowing what the *HELL* he just said.

"Okay, first of all, this isn't some stupid sports game. And second, we're not even in the game. We're on the bench." Mike says, looking at the high-schooler.

"R-Right. So my point is..."

He hesitates.

"Your point, Harrington?" Jess asks, raising her eyebrow sassily.

"Right, yeah, we're on the bench, so, uh, there's nothing we can do."

"That's not entirely true," Dustin says, Jess, turning to him.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, these Demodogs, they have a hive mind. When they ran away from the bus, they were called away."

"So, if we get their attention..." Lucas says, registering what he said.

"Maybe we can draw them from the lab." Max continues.

"And clear a path to the gate." Mike finishes, Jess, widening her eyes.

"Holy shit."

"That's genius!" Gabby exclaims, Jess turning and grinning at her, Gabby walking towards her, grinning.

"Yeah, and then we all die!" Steve exclaimed.

"Well, that's one point of view," Dustin says, Jess, giggling.

"No, that's not a point of view, man. That's a fact."

"Don't be a party-pooper, Harrington." Jess teased, Gabby laughing.

"Yeah, Steve, let us distract the other-dimensional monsters from the lab!" Gabby giggled.

Mike pushed past Dustin and Steve walking towards the other room.

"I got it! This is where the chief dug his hole. This is our way into the tunnel. So..."

Jess followed Mike as he went to the other room, to the drawing that had all the tunnels connected together.

"Here, right here. This is like a hub. So you got all the tunnels feeding in here."

He kneels down on the drawings, looking at it.

"Maybe if we set this on fire..."

"Oh, yeah? That's a no."

"The mind flayer would call away his army." Dustin realized.

"They'd all come to stop us." Lucas continued.

"Hey!"

"Then we circle back to the exit," Jess says, a smile appearing on her face at the plan.

"Guys."

"By the time they realize we're gone-" Gabby continues.

"El would be at the gate." Max finishes, the Party grinning at each other...till-

"Hey, hey, hey!" Steve exclaims, clapping his hands to get their attention.

He points at the drawing.

"This is not happening."

"But-" Mike and Jess protested.

"No, no, no, no, no! No buts! I promised I'd keep you shitheads safe, and that's exactly what I plan on doing. We're staying here. On the bench. And we're waiting for the starting team to do their job. Does everybody understand that?"

"This isn't some stupid sports game!" Mike exclaimed, Jess, gesturing to him with a raised eyebrow.

"I said does everybody understand that? I need a yes."

Jess rolled her eyes, crossing her arms when they heard an engine revving.

The kids ran towards the window, a car appearing.

"It's my brother," Max says, Jess, freezing as she recognized the car.

"H-He can't know I'm here. He'll kill me. He'll kill us."

Jess turned to Gabby and pulled her close to her, feeling extremely uneasy (and familiar) about what Max said.

Guess the Hernandez sisters weren't the only ones with abusive figures in their lives.

X

Steve had stepped outside and Jess had her ears pressed against the wall, closing her eyes as she saw the scene.

"Am I dreaming or is that you, Harrington?"

"Yeah, it's me. Don't cream your pants."

"What are you doing here, *amigo*?"

"I could ask you the same thing...*amigo*."

"Looking for my stepsister. A little birdie told me she was here."

"Huh, that's weird. I don't know her."

"Small? Redhead? Bit of a bitch."

"Doesn't ring a bell. Sorry, buddy."

"You know, I don't know, this...this whole situation, Harrington, I don't know. It's giving me the heebie-jeebies."

"Oh, yeah? Why's that?"

"My 13-year-old sister goes missing all day. And then I find her with you in a stranger's house. And you lie to me about it."

Steve chuckles awkwardly, though he hides it pretty well.

"Man, were you dropped too much as a child, or what? I don't know why you don't understand what I just said. She's not here."

Then, Max's brother points towards the house.

"Then who is that?"

Jess' eyes flung open, just to see the boys, her sister, and Max sink back down from looking at the window.

"Shit! Did he see us?" Dustin exclaimed.

Jess immediately got up, pulling them to the side, when the door slams open, causing everyone to turn and see Max's stepbrother.

Jess hid Gabby behind her, grabbing onto Dustin's hand as Gabby grabbed Mike's.

"Well, well, well."

He slams the door closed, everyone flinching except for Jess.

"Lucas Sinclair. What a surprise."

Jess froze when he mentioned Lucas, the vibe she got from him felt *too* familiar to her parents.

"I thought I told you to stay away from him, Max."

"Billy, go away."

"You disobeyed me. And you know what happens when you disobey me."

"Billy..."

"I break things."

He grabbed Lucas, Jess exclaiming in shock, Gabby freezing up in terror.

"Billy! Stop! Billy! Stop!" Max yelled, the boys yelling for Lucas.

Jess glanced to see an empty beer bottle, an idea clicking in her head.

Gabby turned to her, her eyes widening at the thought.

"Get off me, you-"

"Since Maxine won't listen to me, maybe you will. You stay away from her. **STAY AWAY FROM HER!** You hear me?"

The bottle flies to Jess' hand, Jess glaring at the back of Billy's head.

"I said get off me!"

He kneels Billy's crotch, causing Billy to groan, letting go of him.

"You're so dead, Sin!"

The bottle flew from Jess' hand to Billy's head, causing him to curse, making him distracted, allowing Lucas to run towards the group.

Dustin watched in horror as Billy turned to Jess, looking at her like he would kill her.

Jess squeezed her fists, glaring at Billy.

"*¡¡VETE A LA MIERDA!!*" She screamed, catching Billy off guard with the fluency and the accent.

"Translation:"

She flips him the bird, with both of her hands.

"Why you little Spic!"

He grabs onto Jess, only for her to bite down on his hand, kicking his crotch as he curses out in pain, letting go of her.

However, she isn't prepared for the flying fist that connects to her cheek, causing her to stumble a bit before she regains her balance, glaring at Billy with *MURDER* in her eyes.

"You're dead, little Spic. You're dead."

Suddenly, he gets turned around by Steve.

"No. You are."

Steve punches Billy, knocking him back.

Dustin chuckles, out of relief.

"Steve!" Max exclaims.

Jess ran towards the group, her sister hugging her tightly as Mike wrapped his arms around her, as did Dustin who quickly placed a kiss on the bruise, before turning to see the fight as Billy started laughing.

Lucas hugged her tightly, whispering to her that she was a huge

dumbass for putting herself out there to get hurt like *THAT*.

"Looks like you got some fire in you after all, huh? I've been wanting to meet this King Steve everybody's been telling me so much about."

Steve glared at him.

"Get out."

Billy swings at him, and Steve dodges, punching Billy.

"YES! KICK HIS ASS, STEVE!" Dustin yelled.

"Get him!" Mike yelled.

"MURDER THE SON OF A BITCH!! NOW! NOW!!"

"Get that shithead!"

"KILL THE SON OF A BITCH!! KICK HIS ASS!!"

Jess gasped and winced when Billy smashed a plate onto Steve's head.

"Steve!"

"Billy!"

"Holy shit." Mike cursed, Gabby squeezing his hand a bit tighter, glancing nervously at Jess.

Jess froze and made her and Dustin duck when Billy swung at Steve, his fist coming close to them.

"Shit!"

Billy grabbed onto Steve, Steve trying to fight back.

"No one tells me what to do!"

He smacks his head onto Steve's knocking him down.

He whoops, Jess clenching her fists tightly, glancing Max who had

terror in her eyes.

"You're gonna kill him!" she hears Dustin yell before she taps on Max's shoulder, Max turning to her as the boys' and Gabby's yelling at Billy to stop fill their ears.

She points at the syringe and Max understood, nodding at her before grabbing it, pushing aside the boys and pushing it in Billy's neck, injecting the sedative in him.

Billy stood up, turning to Max and Jess quickly went to her backpack, grabbing the shotgun she had in there, glancing to the side and seeing Steve's nail bat on the floor.

Billy pulled out the syringe out of his neck, walking towards Max.

"The hell is this? You little shit, what did you do?"

Billy stops, stumbling a bit before falling onto his back.

"Shit," Mike whispers, Gabby nodding.

Billy started to laugh, Max turning to Jess just as she tossed the nail bat to her, Max holding it as she threatened Billy, Jess standing next to her, the sound of the gun cocking filling the air.

"From here out, you leave me and my friends alone. Do you understand?"

Jess rose the gun *above* Billy's head by an inch...

But he didn't know that.

"Screw you...and you don't have the balls."

Max swings the bat near his crotch, and Jess pulls the trigger, the boys flinching at the sound.

"Don't test me, you fucker."

Max pulls the bat back up, screaming;

"SAY YOU UNDERSTAND! SAY IT! SAY IT!!"

"...I understand."

"What?"

"I understand."

Billy closes his eyes, becoming unconscious.

Jess lowers the gun, inhaling shakily as Max lets the bat fall to the ground.

"Hey..."

Jess turns to Max, who smiled at her.

"Thanks for the help."

Jess smirks, holding out her hand.

"Anytime, *Zoomer*."

Max grins and takes her hand, shaking it.

She then reaches for Billy's pocket in his jeans, pulling his car keys, showing it to everyone.

"Let's get out of here."

43. Chapter 43

Summary for the Chapter:

While El and Hopper go into the Lab to close the gate, the rest of the Party head down the tunnels.

Hopper's Blazer arrives at the lab parking lot, parking as El opens the door and gets out, looking at it.

She gulps, reaching for her bracelet and rubbing the charms, as she heard the growling of the monsters.

She never thought she'd be back here *WILLINGLY*.

Flashes of her life in her lab immediately took over her brain before she shut it out, realizing how she was gripping her necklace tightly.

She forgot...

Jessie had to stay an entire night and day at the lab for Will.

If Jessie could do it, so can she.

El turns to see Hopper with his rifle, walking up to her.

She turns back to the lab, glaring at it as she heard the rifle cock.

"All right. You let me do the heavy lifting up front, all right? You save your strength till we're below."

He looks at her, noticing the fear behind the brave look she was putting on.

"You okay?"

She doesn't answer, walking straight towards the lab.

She wasn't really...but she HAD to do this.

To protect her family.

X

Jess was in the front seat of Billy's car, Max driving the car.

The boys and Gabby were squished in the back, silence overtaking the car other than Jess giving directions to Max.

The reason she was in the front was because she was injured, which she thought was a bullshit excuse for the boys to make but, she's kinda glad they made her front seat because Gabby wasn't really feeling it.

She sighed, looking out the window from being squished between Dustin.

"Nancy?"

Gabby turned to see Steve had woken up, and Mike was giving him a look for confusing him for his big sister, Lucas sniggering beside him.

She snorted, remembering times when adults would say how much she looked like Jess.

...

HOW?!

Jess has freckles, SHE DOESN'T!

Jess has blue eyes, she has GREEN ones!

The only thing they both shared was their hair type, color and all.

"No, don't touch it."

She turns to see Dustin taking Steve's hand off his injured face, causing the high-schooler to look towards them.

"Hey, buddy..."

"Hey, Harrington." She says, growing some Aloe Vera in her hands, getting a knife from her pocket to cut it, rubbing the goo on his face as Dustin shushed him.

"It's okay. You put up a good fight."

"He kicked your ass, but you put up a good fight." Gabby smiled, Dustin nodding at the younger Colombian.

"You're okay."

Steve groans, hearing another female voice as he looked to the front, seeing the older Colombian.

"Okay, you're gonna keep straight for a half a mile, then make a left on Mount Sinai."

Steve looked slightly to the left.

"What's going on?"

Max turned to look at him and then he panicked.

A thirteen-year-old was driving a car.

"Oh, my god."

"Steve, just relax. She's driven before." Dustin attempts to calm him down.

"Yeah, in a parking lot," Mike says, making it worse.

"That counts," Lucas argued.

"Oh, my god!"

"They were going to leave you behind...well, everyone except Jess," Dustin says, Jess, smirking from the front seat.

"Oh, my god."

"We promised you'd be cool, okay?"

"Uh, YOU promised that Dustin. I didn't." Jess says.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. What's going on?"

At that moment, Max stepped on the gas, making the car go faster.

"Shit!" Jess exclaimed, being caught momentarily off guard by the sudden speed.

"Oh, my god! No! Whoa! Stop the car! Slow down."

"I told you he'd freak out," Mike exclaimed.

"Stop the car!" Steve yelled.

"EVERYBODY SHUT UP! I'm trying to focus!" Max screamed.

"Oh, wait, that's Mount Sinai! Make a left!" Jess exclaimed, pointing.

"What?"

"MAKE A LEFT!!"

Max turned sharply to the left, everyone screaming for their lives.

"MAXINE I SWEAR TO GOD IF WE DIE I'M GOING TO PERSONALLY MURDER YOU!" Gabby shrieked, regretting going through with this plan.

X

Jess had her eyes shut, clutching at her seat tightly as she was pretty sure they were all going to die by Max's crazy driving...

...Only to jolt slightly forward as the car suddenly stops.

"HELLO!" Steve exclaims in shock, everyone panting in relief, Jess giggling as she opens her eyes.

"That was both scary and fun." She whispered, still giggling.

"Whoa." Dustin giggled, clutching his chest as his heart beated wildly.

"Incredible," Mike says, sighing in relief.

"I told you. Zoomer." Max says, parking and getting out.

"That was Bitchin'." Gabby sighs, the kids laughing as they exited the car.

Lucas opened the truck and everyone grabbed their bandanas and goggles, putting them on to cover their faces.

Jess hears Steve groan as he gets out of the car.

"Guys."

Jess tightens the knot of her bandana, Mike glancing at her with worry as he grabbed the oil can.

"You still wanna do this?" he asked.

"Yes, Mike. I still do." Jess answered, readjusting the goggles on her face.

"Oh, no. Guys."

Mike nods as he went to the hole Hopper dug up, ignoring Steve when he asked;

"Hey, where do you think you're going?"

Jess lifted her palm, a little flame appearing from it as she concentrated on that specific power.

"What are you, deaf? Hello?"

She made it go away, reaching for her backpack in the trunk, filled with back up supplies and her gun, just in case.

"We are not going down there right now. I made myself clear."

She sighed, glancing at Dustin, her eyes begging him to make Steve shut up.

"Hey, there's no chance we're going to that hole, all right?"

Jess walks past Steve as he yells;

"This ends right now!"

"Steve, you're upset, I get it," Dustin exclaims as he helps Gabby fit her goggles properly, making sure nothing contaminated can get through.

"But the bottom line is, a party member requires assistance, and it is our duty to provide that assistance." He continues, his eyes darting to see the rest of the group were already heading down the hole.

"Now, I know you promised Nance that you would keep us safe..."

Gabby lifts up the backpack with the nail bat.

"So, keep us safe." She finishes, handing it to him.

Steve sighs, grabbing the backpack.

These little shits were going to drive him crazy.

X

Steve falls through the hole, grunting as he stood up, his eyes widening.

"Holy shit."

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure it's this way," Mike says as Jess peered at the map over his shoulder.

"You're pretty sure, or you're certain?" Dustin asks, not wanting to get lost here.

"I'm 100% sure. Just follow me and you'll know."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hey, hey, hey, hey. I don't think so." Steve says, walking up to Mike.

"What?"

"Any of you little shits die down here, I'm getting the blame. Got it, dipshit?"

Jess rolled her eyes as Gabby stood next to her, grabbing ahold of her hand.

"From here on out, I'm leading the way. Come on, let's go."

Jess and Gabby followed Steve, both humming nervously.

"Come on. Hey, a little hustle!"

They glanced at each other and squeezed their joined hands, silently agreeing to stick together.

No one was going to be left behind today.

44. Chapter 44

Summary for the Chapter:

The kids set fire to the tunnels...which helps clear the way for Hopper and El to go down the elevator to close the gate.

The alarms keep blaring, El rubbing her bracelet as Hopper had his gun up and ready, glancing everywhere and flinching at every body on the floor.

They headed down the stairs, when Hopper stops, causing her to hesitate, seeing a lot of blood on the stairway.

"Stay here."

Hopper walked further down, his finger at the trigger, ready to shoot when he stops.

"Oh, shit."

It was Owens, his leg nearly torn apart by the Demodogs.

It looks like he won't be moving any time soon.

He kneeled down, inspecting the wound, sighing at the big, bloody gash.

"Those suckers got you pretty good, huh? Well, if Jessica could survive the worst of their doings, so can you."

Owens opens his mouth, about to say something.

"It's okay, don't talk. Don't talk. I got you. I got you. I got you."

Owens glances up to see a teenage punk girl come up behind Hopper, her eyes staring impassively at him, as if she didn't trust him.

He noticed she was rubbing a necklace, the name *JESSIE* dangling from the chain.

"Oh, yeah, I've been meaning to tell you. This is Eleven. Eleven, Doc Owens. Doc Owens, Eleven."

Owens suddenly remembers Jessica rubbing a necklace that had the word *ONCE* dangling from the chain and if his Spanish was correct, it translates into eleven.

And from the files, he knows that the two were friends.

"She's been staying with me for about a year and she's about to save our asses. Maybe when this is all said and done, maybe you can help her out, too, you know? Maybe you could help her lead, like, a normal life. One where she's not poked and prodded and...treated like some kind of lab rat, you know?"

El hesitates before speaking up.

"And the Hernandez sisters, Gabriella and Jessica...is there a possible way to make them my...adoptive...siblings?" she asks, forcing her voice to not sound scared, glancing at Hopper at the last second who smiled at her and nods, looking back at Owens.

"That also means her fellow friends from way back then, before they were separated. As you probably heard the rumors of María and Alejandro Hernandez abusing their eldest for about, uh, four years, and currently she's staying at a friend's house to avoid being put in a group home. The youngest was believed to be killed in an accident that dealt with her being hit by a car, but that has been proven false tonight. So, it would help if the three can go back to having a normal life together, as a family, where they won't be able to be taken by any government assholes."

He looks up at Owens, shrugging.

"I don't know, just a thought."

He tightens the belt around the wound, to prevent more blood from spilling, Owens groaning in pain.

"But, uh...think about it," Hopper says, patting his shoulder as Owens nods.

Hopper hands him a pistol, just in case any Demodogs came.

"Don't go anywhere."

Owens chuckled as Hopper ventured downstairs, El following behind him, squeezing her necklace nervously.

X

The group was still walking through the tunnels, looking everywhere.

"God!" Lucas exclaimed.

"What is this place?" Max asked, getting a shrug from him.

"Guys, come on. Keep moving." Steve says, continuing on.

Jess and Gabby were whispering to each other as they followed Steve.

"So...you and...Kali? You guys found a home and a family when you escaped?"

Gabby nodded.

"They were very accepting of us...but that was also where next door I found someone very special."

Jess glanced at her sister, before asking;

"What was his name?"

Gabby shook her head;

"Not a 'he', *them*."

Jess glanced at her, and smiled.

"Sorry, what was their name?"

Gabby smiled beneath her bandana.

"Diana Abbot. They were the most beautiful human being on the

planet."

Jess frowned, furrowing her eyebrows.

"Were'?"

Gabby frowned, rubbing her shoulder when Jess gasped, shutting her eyes as her sister whispered, "Oh..." in an understanding.

Jess hugged her, Gabby sniffling as she hugged her back.

"I'm so sorry Gabby...that's awful."

"You would have liked them, Jess, they took no bullshit from anyone, not even me."

Jess smiled.

"I already do...Do you think they would have liked me?"

Gabby looked at her sister and smiled.

"Oh, definitely. I think they would even have a crush on you."

Jess burst out laughing, cheeks flaming red.

"I appreciate the flattery, but this bisexual mess is already seeing someone."

Gabby rolled her eyes, about to say something when;

"SHIT! HELP! HELP! HELP!"

Jess froze, turning.

"Dustin!"

She ran ahead of the group, seeing Dustin fall to the ground.

"Shit!"

"Dustin!" she exclaimed, rushing towards him, as he shrieked.

"Dustin!"

"Dustin!"

"What happened?!" Steve exclaimed, pushing through.

"It's in my mouth! Some got in my mouth! Shit!" Dustin whimpers, Jess placing her hands on his shoulder.

He pulls down his bandana, coughing as Jess patted his back, rolling her eyes at his dramatics.

He spits onto the ground and looked at the gang.

"I'm okay."

Gabby rolls her eyes, sighing.

"You serious?"

"Very funny, man. Nice. Very nice."

"Jesus, what an idiot."

Jess looked towards Dustin and pulled down her bandana, placing a kiss on his lips, shutting her eyes as he kissed back.

"Hey, lovebirds! Hurry up!"

Jess pulls from the kiss, giving him a smirk as she pulled back up her bandana.

"Come on, Drama Queen."

She gets up and follows the group.

"Hang on. Wait, wait."

He walks up to her, grabbing her hand and intertwining their fingers as they followed the group, stopping when;

"All right, Wheeler and Hernandez. I think we found your hub."

Jess lets go of Dustin's hand and walked up to Mike and Steve, looking at the hub.

Anger flew through her veins as she squeezed her fists.

"Let's drench it," Mike says, his own anger sounding in his voice.

Everyone got to work, drenching every part of the hub with oil, not wanting to miss any part.

They NEEDED this to work.

X

El and Hopper were still walking through the lab, not yet having faced any Demodogs yet.

They heard growling, causing them to stop.

"Stay here," Hopper says, walking forwards.

El started to breathe heavily, anxiously grabbing at her necklace and rubbing it, gulping.

Hopper moves to the doorway, the growling growing louder.

He turns off his flashlight, moving towards the doorway and pressing his back against the wall.

He takes out his knife, using the reflection to see the Demodogs in the room, causing him to sigh.

"Shit."

El breathes in nervously, now rubbing the charms on her bracelet.

X

"All right, you guys ready?" Steve asks, placing a hand on Jess' shoulder.

"Yeah."

"Ready."

"Ready."

Dustin turns to Jess.

"Light her up."

Jess holds out her palm, waiting for Steve's cue.

Steve sighs.

"I'm in such deep shit."

He nods at Jess and she forms a fireball in her hand.

X

Hopper panted, getting ready to fight against a bunch of Demodogs.

"All right."

He storms in, the Demodogs roaring at him.

X

Jess throws the fireball at the hub, it exploding in flames.

The gang covers their faces, backing up a bit.

X

The Demodogs started to screech in pain, causing Hopper to lower his gun in disbelief.

X

"Go, go, go!" Steve yells, everyone getting up to run back to the hole.

Steve led the way as everyone ran, Jess grabbing tightly onto Gabby's hand.

"Let's go, let's go!" Steve yelled, everyone, panting.

"Oh, my god. Oh, my god." Dustin was repeating, careful to not trip.

X

The Demodogs ran back down the hole, Hopper just staring in disbelief.

What the hell happened?

El walked up to him, glancing at everything around her, her looking up at him and back at the hole in the glass.

"Chief are you there? Chief do you copy?"

Hopper grabs the walkie.

"Yeah, I copy."

"Close it."

El and Hopper looked at each other, ready to do this.

X

They were in the elevator, going down as El's eyes widened at how big the gate was.

It was so big...how was she supposed to close it by herself?

She shut her eyes, banishing that unhelpful thought.

No, she CAN do this.

Like she told Jessie...

She has gotten stronger.

Still...the nervousness she felt came strongly, as she grabbed onto Hopper's hand, squeezing it gently.

She can do this.

She can protect them.

She can protect her family.

45. Chapter 45

Summary for the Chapter:

El closes the gate, the Party manages to get out of the tunnels out alive, and a month later, they all get to go to the Snowball.

It's definitely a happy ending for them...at least for now.

"Oh, my god! Oh, my god! Oh, my god! Oh, my god!" Steve was repeating as the gang ran through the tunnels.

Jess ran from between Dustin and Mike, panting.

"Hey, this way!"

She kept running, freezing when she heard Mike exclaim in shock, a thump being heard behind her.

She turns, horror in her eyes when she saw a vine wrapping around Mike's ankle.

"Help! Help! Help! Help!"

"MIKE!!"

X

Hopper stops the elevator, glancing at the gate in front of them.

He looks at El and she nods at him, ready.

She lets go of his hand, taking a deep breath in.

She can do this.

She lifts her hand, glaring at the gate, concentrating.

She felt the familiar sensation run down her nose, her hands shaking as she concentrated.

A shadow appears behind the gate, causing her to drop her glare, her eyes wide with shock.

Hopper stared as well, recognizing the shape of the head from Will's drawing.

It was the Mind Flayer.

X

"Help! Help!" Mike screamed as Jess ran towards him, the rest of the gang following behind her.

"Hold on!" Steve exclaimed.

"Steve, pull him out," Dustin yelled as Jess wrapped her arms under Mike's, everyone else grabbing his arms as Steve got his bat ready.

"Everybody back! Back!" Lucas yelled.

Steve swing his bat down at the vine, it reacting in pain.

He swung two more times before it breaks, loosening its hold on Mike, causing him to scramble up, Jess hugging him tightly.

"Oh, fucking hell..." she sighed.

"You good?"

"You okay?"

"I'm okay," Mike says, as Jess lets go of him, still holding onto his arm.

"Guys, we gotta go!" Steve exclaims, when they heard growling.

Jess immediately pushed everyone behind her telekinetically, looking at the Demodog in front of her.

She lets out a soft, audible whimper, Dustin walking closer to her as Steve placed his hand on him.

"Dart."

Jess turns to Dustin who looks at her and nods, causing her to drop her arms, but still holding onto his hand, as if to say;

"I'm doing this with you."

They step forward, the gang exploding with chatter.

"Shh. Stop." Dustin says.

"Dustin, Jess get back," Max says.

"Jess, Dustin, are you crazy? Get back!" Mike hissed.

"Trust me, please."

They step closer and closer to Dart, the Demodog walking towards the couple.

"Hey. It's me. It's me. It's just your friend, it's Dustin." Dustin says, pulling down his bandana and pulling up his goggles.

"It's Dustin, all right?"

Jess hesitated before she crouched down as well, pulling her bandana down and her goggles up, forcing a smile on her face, squeezing Dustin's hand.

"Hey, cutie. Remember me?" she says, trying to make her voice sound steady.

"You remember us?" Dustin asks, squeezing her hand back.

Jess' heartbeat hammered quickly.

"Will you let us pass?"

Dart snarls, Jess freezing and squeezing her eyes shut, sighing shakily.

"Okay, okay. I'm sorry. I'm sorry about the storm cellar. That was a pretty douchey thing to do."

Dart steps closer, and Jess gulps.

"You hungry? Yeah?" Dustin asks, letting go of Jess' hand and taking off his backpack.

"He's insane," Lucas says.

"Don't." Mike hissed.

"Shut up," Steve whispers.

"I've got our favorite. See? Nougat." Dustin says, lifting the Three Musketeers bar up.

Dart approaches him as he ripped the candy wrapper and set the candy down.

"Look at that. Yummy. Here, all right."

Dart leans towards it, eating it.

"Eat up, buddy. Come on. Come on."

Jess motioned the gang to move, keeping her eyes on Dart.

"Let's go."

As they moved, Dustin grabbed another one.

"There's plenty. I've got more."

As they stood up, Dustin swinging his backpack back on, Jess grabbed his hand, putting back on her goggles and bandana.

"Goodbye, buddy."

She squeezed his hand as they followed Steve.

"Let's go! Let's go!"

X

El's hand was shaking as she tried to close the gate, making little to no progress.

She closes her eyes, thinking.

I want you to find something from your past, something that angers you. Now channel it.

She focuses, thinking of the negativity around her.

She screams.

"PAPA!"

She opens her eyes, her teeth shown in a snarl as the gate started to close.

It was working.

X

"Come on, let's go! Let's go!" Steve yells.

The tunnels start to shake, causing everyone to exclaim in shock.

"Jesus!"

Roaring is heard, causing Jess to turn from the way they ran, her eyes widening.

"What was that?" Max asked.

"They're coming," Mike exclaimed, Jess, letting in a shaky gasp, her heart hammering.

"RUN! RUN!" She screamed, everyone, running faster than before.

"Let's go! Let's go!"

"Come on, Mike!"

"Move, Mike!"

Jess grabbed onto Mike's hand, pulling him with her, making them run faster.

"There, there!" Lucas yelled, seeing the rope.

"Come on! Let's go! Go, go, go! Let's go! Come on! Come on!" Steve yelled.

He lifts up Gabby first, her grabbing onto the rope as she climbed up.

"Come on!"

"Come on, hurry up! Come on!"

Max came afterward, then Lucas, and then Mike.

Jess was about to come up when they heard roaring.

"Oh, shit!" Steve cursed, getting his bat ready.

Jess gulped, glancing at Steve and Dustin, everyone's yelling from above being muffled as she came to a REALLY STUPID DECISION;

She grabbed onto Dustin, pulling down both her and his bandanas and kissed him, tears forming in her eyes when she pulled back.

"I'm so sorry."

She swings her hand up, causing both Steve and Dustin to fly up the hole, out of the danger...

...Which she left herself in.

"JESSICA! ARE YOU CRAZY?! CLIMB UP!"

"JESSICA!"

"JESS!"

"JESSIE!! CLIMB UP!"

She froze when she saw the Demodogs, covering her face, awaiting her end...

And only to gasp when she felt them run past her, lowering her arms as she turned to see them run ahead.

She froze, realizing what it could possibly mean as she looked up to see Mike say;

"Eleven..."

She let out a relieved smile, reaching to climb up when a vine wrapped around her ankle, pulling her down.

She yelps as she hit the ground, more vines wrapping around her body, causing her to panic, screaming.

"JESS!"

"OH MY GOD, JESS!"

She opens her eyes, Mike reaching down, screaming for her.

She attempts to reach out to him, only for the vines to pull down her arm, causing her to scream out, sobbing in pain as they tightened their grip on her.

"MIKE! MIKE! MIKE!" She screamed, yanking at the vines, trying to heat up the tunnel, blood running down her nose and ears, her eyes becoming bloodshot.

Her screams get cut off when a vine wrapped around her neck, choking her.

As her vision blurred, she could barely see some figures jump back in the hole, the vines loosening its hold on her.

She gasps for air when the one around her neck comes off, someone pulling her up and hugging her.

She coughs, her vision becoming more clear as she looks up at the figure when they let go of her, realizing it was Dustin.

"ARE YOU SHITTING ME JESS?!" he yells, anger and fear in his voice.

She hesitates, knowing full well she deserved the yelling.

"Dustin, I know it was stupid," she says, unaware of everyone

watching.

"Really?! Then, WHY did you do it?!"

"I had to get you two out of-"

"FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF?! PUT YOURSELF OUT OF THE DANGER FIRST?!" Dustin shrieks, making her shut up.

"WE ALMOST LOST YOU TWICE TODAY!! MY HEART CAN'T TAKE IT! I CAN'T LOSE YOU! I LOVE YOU!"

She froze, her eyes widening at Dustin who suddenly breaks down, tears running down his cheeks.

"I...I...I can't..."

She bursts into tears, throwing her arms around him, squeezing him tightly as he hugs her back, sobs wracking through his body.

"I'm sorry...I'm so sorry...I was being stupid," she whispered, rubbing his back as they moved side to side.

She pulls from the hug, pulling down her bandana, and kissed him, cupping his face gently as his arms went around her waist, tears running down both their cheeks.

She pulls apart, pressing her forehead against his, smiling at him as she says, loud and clear;

"Te amo también."

His eyes widened before he let out shaky laugh-sob, hugging her again.

She hugs back, smiling widely.

She loves him.

X

El was still closing the gate, getting closer and closer to finishing.

She only focused on her task, the sounds of bullets going off and Hopper cursing seeming so far away.

She was panting heavily, veins popping against her forehead.

"You have a wound, Eleven."

Them cutting her Mama open.

Blood was coming from both her nostrils now, blood clotting her ears.

"A terrible wound."

She touches the Demogorgon.

It roars at her.

"The gate, I opened it."

She has her teeth in a snarl, panting, something coming out of the gate, towards her.

"And it's festering."

"I'm the monster."

"And it will grow."

"Spread."

Her Mama screams.

"PAPA!"

They shock her Mama's head.

She screams from inside the bath.

She's NOT afraid.

NOT ANYMORE.

"And eventually, it will kill you."

She screams in anger and frustration.

"JANE!"

Jessie gets a knife deep into her chest by her mama, her spitting out blood.

Jessie screams, as they drag her away, tears running down as they tasered her head.

"!!ONCE!!"

She thrusts her other hand out, letting out a strangled scream as she felt herself rise up into the air, the thing that was coming towards her from the gate going back.

She keeps screaming, all of her anger and fury being channeled into pushing this thing back into the gate and closing it, Hopper watching with wide eyes.

And not even a minute later, she shoves the thing back into the gate, closing it, HOPEFULLY, for good.

She sighs, closing her eyes as she fell.

Hopper catches her, his gun falling god knows where as he had the elevator go back up, El gasping and wrapping her arms around his neck, crying.

"You did good, kid. You did so good."

He places a kiss on her cheek, sighing.

She sighs, tightening her grip on him a bit more, falling back into unconsciousness.

She did it.

She protected her family.

X

Meanwhile, the gang stared at the car for a whole 3 minutes was glaring its lights at them, blinding them until it suddenly died down.

Jess let out a sigh, smiling.

"She did it. She closed the gate."

Mike turned to her.

"How do you know?"

She shrugs.

"I just do."

She smiled, thankful that it was all over...

Or...if it wasn't then...hopefully it was over for now.

Because they NEEDED a goddamn break after everything that happened.

X

One Month Later...

Hopper stepped into the bar, walking towards a booth, sitting on the seat.

"Chief-o." Owens greeted him in the seat across.

"How's the leg?"

"Better. Pretty sure my football career is over."

Hopper chuckles.

"How about Jessica?"

"She's better than you. Those injuries didn't stop her Parkouring and exercising."

"Good. I'm glad."

He pushes a plate with half a sandwich towards Hopper.

"Want some? No way I'm gonna finish it."

"No. I'm, uh...on a diet."

"Well, you're a better man than me. Hey, got something for you."

He hands Hopper an envelope, Hopper opening it as his breath gets caught in his throat at the paper.

Jane Hopper

"Congratulations, Pops. Though, there's more in there."

Hopper lifts the other two and his heart just stops.

Jessica Vera Hopper

Gabriella Thea Hopper

He looks at Owens in surprise.

"I thought-"

"Sometimes I impress even myself."

Hopper puts it away as Owens continued;

"Still, I'd let things cool off for a while, if I were you. That goes for the other two as well, have them stick to their former last name until things cool down."

"How long is a while?" Hopper asks.

"Want to be safe? I give it a year."

"A year?"

Hopper sighed, not wanting to do that to El again, grabbing the other half of the sandwich.

Well...maybe...

"What about one night out?"

"One night?"

"Yeah. How risky would that be?"

"What's so important about one night?"

X

Jess and Gabby were giggling as they placed the last finishing touches on their makeup, Christmas music playing in the radio.

Gabby smiled at Jess who decided to give no fucks, and wear a dress that proudly showed off her scars.

Jess had straightened her hair, spraying a lot of hairspray on it to make it stay in place.

"All right, now it's your turn!"

They turn to El who was watching them from Jess' bed, Hopper having dropped her off there when he went to work.

El smiled when Jess grabbed the dress she bought for El, handing it to her.

"Go on! Get dressed!"

El giggled and took the dress, going into the bathroom to change.

Jess smiled, turning to Gabby who was in a light green suit with matching pants and a white blouse, her curls curled up more.

"Excited?"

"More like nervous. Who am I supposed to dance with?"

"You don't have to dance with anyone if you don't want to. Just have fun."

El comes out of the bathroom in her dress and Jess gasps.

"Oh my god...El that looks AMAZING on you!"

El blushed.

"Really?"

"Yes! *¡Te ves hermosa!*"

El smiled, flinching when they heard the doorbell ring.

Jess sighed, frowning.

"Well, that's my ride. Behave till Dad comes, alright? Gabby, help her with her makeup."

Gabby grins.

"Will do sis. See you at the dance!"

Jess places kisses on both their cheeks, waving as she went downstairs, opening the door to see Mike, his eyes widening at her.

"Holy, shit. Jess, you look amazing."

Jess laughs, closing the door.

"Thanks, Mike. Now, off to the Snow Ball?"

Mike nods.

"Off to the Snow Ball."

X

Jess was talking to Lucas, Max, and Mike, laughing about something when Mike says;

"Holy shit. What happened to you?"

Jess looked up and froze, her heart hammering fast as she took in Dustin's outfit and appearance.

Jesus, he looked handsome.

"What do you mean, 'What happened'?"

"What?"

"Dude."

"Your hair."

"Is there a bird nesting in there?" Lucas asked, reaching for it.

"What do you mean, 'What's wrong with my hair'? There's no bird nesting in here, asshole. Okay? I worked hard."

Jess pushes Lucas aside and Dustin freezes, taking her in.

"Well, I think it's very handsome."

He blushes, smiling at her.

"Thanks, Jess."

Suddenly, *Time After Time* starts playing and everyone watched as all the kids paired up.

Lucas exhaled before turning to Max.

"Max..."

Jess covered her mouth as the redhead turned to the boy, covering her snort.

"Hey. Um, it's nice, right? You want to, um... You want to, like... You know? Like, just you and me?"

"Are you trying to ask me to dance, Stalker?"

"No, of course not. Unless you want to?"

Max chuckles.

"So smooth. Come on."

She grabs onto his hand and dragged him to the dance floor.

Jess giggles, shaking her head.

"Hey, Zombie Boy."

They look up to see a girl walk up to Will, Jess' smile dropping into a protective glare.

"Do you want to dance?"

Jess drops the glare.

Oh.

"Um...I don't..."

Mike hit his chest, telling him to say yes as he stammered, clearly caught off guard.

"I mean...I mean, yeah. Sure."

The girl grins.

"Cool."

They walk off to the dance floor, Jess frowning in worry.

"Hey, Jess."

She turns to Dustin and her smile reappears as he cleared his throat and held out his hand.

"Shall we?"

She laughs, nodding, taking his hand.

"We shall."

They walk to the dance floor, Dustin placing his hands on her waist, blushing as she wrapped her hands around his neck, smiling at him.

"You look beautiful," he whispered.

She blushes.

"Thank you."

He smiled, pressing his forehead against hers, both shutting their eyes as they danced to the rhythm.

X

Mike sighed, sitting on the chair as the song switched to *Every Breath You Take*, still waiting for a specific person, though he was telling himself not to get disappointed if she couldn't come.

It still wasn't safe.

She should still be in-

The door swings open and he lifts his gaze towards it, freezing.

El had arrived with Gabby, the Colombian whispering something in her ear before she leaves, winking at her.

She looked beautiful, with her blue dress and her hair styled with neat curls, three bracelets on her left wrist, neat makeup highlighting her beautiful face.

He stands up, love clearly shouting from his eyes.

El looks around, stopping when she meets his gaze, drinking in his outfit as well, starstruck.

She lets a smile appear on her lips, walking towards him as he walks to her, meeting in the middle.

"Y-You look beautiful." Mike stammers, smiling at her.

She blushes, ducking her head down before gazing at him again.

He gazes at the dance floor nervously.

"Do you want to dance?"

El tenses, gazing at the dance floor.

"I...don't know how."

Mike smiles reassuringly.

"I don't either. Do you want to figure it out?"

She nods, smiling at him.

He takes her hand and leads her to the dance floor.

He shows her how it's done, placing her hands on his shoulders, his own placed at her waist, smiling at her as she pulled him a little closer, wrapping her hands around his neck.

X

Jess and Dustin were nodding their heads to the beat of the song, huge grins on their faces as they danced with each other, without a care in the world.

They didn't care about the popular girls that were whispering about him and her.

They had been through so much to care.

They were Bookworm & Toothless.

No...

Better yet, they were ***The Scholar & The Bard***, one of the Party's best duos.

Dustin leans in and places a kiss on Jess' lips, their eyes shutting closed as Jess placed one of her hands on his cheek, kissing back.

When they pull apart, they smiled at each other, pressing their foreheads together.

X

Meanwhile, Gabby had saved Will from the girl, both dancing together.

They were laughing as they each took turns spinning each other, mouthing the lyrics playfully at each other.

Jess was right.

She is having fun.

X

Max and Lucas were dancing together, both smiling at each other as they moved to the rhythm, not minding the stares from their schoolmates around them.

Max decides to lean in and kiss Lucas, catching him off guard as he stares at her with wide eyes when she pulls back, grinning like an idiot.

What?

She thought he looked cute.

X

El and Mike danced together, being careful as to not step on each other's shoes, staring at each other's eyes.

They were able to communicate with just their eyes, content as they danced together, the music fading in a distance as they swayed to the rhythm.

Mike leans in at the same time as El does, their lips meeting in a soft, quick kiss, both of their eyes shutting close.

El smiles at him, pressing her forehead against his chin, a smile appearing on his face as she did so.

Yeah...tonight was probably the best night she experienced in her life.

She was safe and she had her family.

Nothing could go wrong.

And even if it did, she had her family by her side.

And family sticks together.

No matter what.

To be continued...

Author's Note:

I'm posting this now because I want to. I'm not done with this book yet so, expect slow updates.